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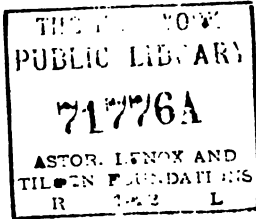
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To one who noticed and remembered and was able
to express in illuminating language the most
peculiar and complicated as well as the
noblest phases of human existence
CHARLES DICKENS

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I

As long as there are blue skies, while there are fresh and lovely flowers, I trust that there will be young girls—as sweet and innocent as Bettina Wane—who may enjoy them.

Closely followed by the lumbering and ungainly form of old Margaret O'Keefe, Bettina's slender figure was clearly outlined in the early morning light of a soft and balmy summer day as the two proceeded along the public highway that passed in front of the young girl's home.

"We'll shure be afther foindin' thim *this* toime, Miss Bettina darlin', because we're out so airly," puffed the old woman, waddling cheerfully on. "Annyway, their purty faces an' the bright eyes of them shud soon be lookin' up at us."

"Yes, Margaret dear," answered the girl, her carefully modulated words making a strange contrast to the thick tones of her companion's voice, "I hope today that we shall be successful in our quest."

"There be wan now!" exclaimed the old woman, ambling as hastily as she could to the edge of the ditch beside the road, and stooping down with great difficulty to examine something that was on the ground. "I don't believe that even in auld Oireland herself there iver was a purtier blue flower, set off with its green leaves, than this wan here!"

She then triumphantly held up for Bettina's

inspection a dog-tooth violet, which the girl eagerly, lovingly, took within her hands and pressed lightly against her glowing cheek.

“ ’Tis a ’most the color of yer own bright eyes, me darlin’!” old Margaret cried, admiringly, “its face is jist as swate as yer own!”

The two then started out upon a systematic search, and soon had quite a bunch of flowers as a reward for their efforts; Bettina laughingly insisted that Margaret O’Keefe’s dimmed eyes were just as blue as were her own, so she should share with her the violets they had found.

“But, darlin’,” protested her companion, “ ’tis youth that goes wid bloomin’ flowers, an’ not ould age! ’Tis health an’ strength an’ soft, smooth cheeks, not feebleness an’ wrinkles, that ripresent the sunshine and the clear blue sky the same as blossoms do!”

“Then, Margaret,” replied the girl, placing a strong, slim arm across the substantial shoulders of the other woman, “I think I ought to make you take them all! You bring the sunshine with you when you come, and take it with you when you go, and as to clear blue skies—it seems to me you do not see the clouds at all! Here are the violets, Margaret dear!” thrusting them into her gnarled old hands.

“An’ yit she niver kissed the blarney stone, the blissed child! She niver set her purty fut on Oirish soil! I’ll take some of the blossoms, darlin’, because you give them to me—an’ not because I’m young an’ purty like ye are yerself! Human bein’s,” she continued, as if she were addressing a young and inexperienced child, “are like the green leaves on the trees when they are *young* an’ full of life, and thin, they love to talk an’ almost always wan green leaf, that is jist as green

as annythin' can iver be, kapes whisperin' to anither green leaf, soft and low, so that a rustlin' sound is heard all through the tree. . . . And thin," she went on, starting as if aroused from sleep, "whin they are *auld* they're like the leaves agin, whin they're dried up an' withered an', wid their voices sharp and raspin', fall screechin' to the ground."

"If one must screech in order to be old," Bettina said affectionately patting the shoulder on which her hand still lightly rested, "then you are *very* young—for your voice now is just as sweet, it seems to me, as when I was yet a very little child. You used to sit beside my bed and sing to me until I went to sleep."

"An' that was not so very long ago, me darlin'!" cried old Margaret. "Ye are but twinty now! An' so it is wid youth!" she moralized, "twinty years, lookin' backward or forward, seems a turrible long ways, thin. But whin a body has got to the top of the hill and is goin' down the other side of it, knowin' that she'll soon get to the bottom and quit goin' altogether, twinty years. . . ."

"Margaret, dear," interrupted the girl, to whom the future, without the devoted companionship that had been, up to that moment, a part of her daily life, was distasteful, "you promised to tell me sometime after I had grown up, about Biddy Malone and the banshee who called to her when she was crossing the moor."

"Biddy Malone," began the old woman, taking up with alacrity her favorite occupation, "lived all alone wid her uncle, Father O'Flaherty. She was a purty girrl, wid big blue eyes, light, curlin' hair, pink cheeks and a plump figure; she had more thin wan lover, but the wan among thim

all she cared for most hersilf was Mike O'Toole. And he was jist the wan the priest her uncle cared for least; she knew that this was so and yit if annythin' the knowin' of it added to her love for Mike. She had to go across the moor ivry night, afhter dark, to get the cow belongin' to the priest. Wan night as she was hurryin' the cow along as fast as iver she could make her go, she heard the banshee callin', as plain as iver any call could be—'Mike! Mike! Mike O'Toole!' Three times she heard this call and ivry time, it seemed to her, the call was jist a little deeper and more solemn-like than the time before. She knew thin that she would never dare to marry Mike, for," old Margaret ended seriously, fully believing the statement she was about to make, "if the banshee calls the name of anny man three times over, to anny woman, it means that that wan woman must not marry that wan man. An' she had heard the banshee callin', 'Mike! Mike! Mike O'Toole!' three times, in that wan night. She left the cow behind her and ran with all her might, and not until she had knelt down beside her bed and counted over, manny times, the beads upon her rosary did she feel safe—for when the banshee calls the name of anny man to anny woman it means that she's in danger.

She heard a noise, as if a door had opened and been shut, an' whin her uncle, Father O'Flaherty, had come into the kitchen and was sittin' down beside the table there, as he did most ivry night, she wint to him and crossed hersilf an' told him what had happened. He was a little out of breath, but he said that he had heard the cow come in alone and had gone out to tie her up. He listened close to Biddy's story, an' whin she had comploted it he told her he supposed she knew what the

banshee's callin' meant. An' whin she cried an' said she did, he crossed himsilf and looked at her severely; thin he told her niver to so much as mention the name of Mike O'Toole to him again. An' whin she sadly shook her head he blessed her, and told her to say her prayers all over careful, an' thin to go to bed. An' afther that Biddy Malone," Margaret told her auditor solemnly, "niver heard the banshee call any more—although she wint as usual to get the cow belongin' to the priest, and bring her home across the moor.

"Niver do you fail, Miss darlin'," looking fearfully around, "to heed the warnin'—if the banshee calls to you!"

At that moment a sudden sound was heard that, although startling, was also reassuring; old Margaret clutched Bettina's arm and clung to it in terror, but the girl laughed joyfully and called:

"Here, Bonny, here! This way!" as a shaggy, golden collie came bounding up to her. "Where have you been? How did you happen to miss coming with me this morning? I know what *her* cry means," turning toward her old nurse who, having recovered from her momentary fright, was again in a normal mental attitude. "I know that she is saying that she loves us both," for the dog was dividing her attention between the two, "and would defend us against anything that would attempt to do us harm."

The old woman shook her head dubiously and did not release her hold upon Bettina's arm, although a look of almost bovine contentment crept over her face as she regarded the dog who now walked sedately and proudly beside them.

"If it was meant for us to hear the banshee cryin'," she declared, "not annything in all this world could shut the sound from us."

"Don't worry Margaret, dear," the young girl said, "we're happy, here together, with the sky and the sunshine and the flowers and," she ended, crouching down upon the ground beside the dog and hugging her enthusiastically, "with Bonny!"

"I think we'd be happier yit," old Margaret murmured, a trace of bitterness creeping into her low tones, "if someone else shud take the place that that spalpeen Barney McCoy's so glad to fill."

Amusement she tried hard to suppress began to spread itself across Bettina's countenance, as she hid it in Bonny's soft and golden fleece.

II

When Bettina Wane and old Margaret O'Keefe returned home from their morning's jaunt, the girl repaired at once to the library, where her tutor Barney McCoy awaited her.

In accordance with a custom so regular that it had become almost a habit, the tutor began to instruct the moment his pupil appeared:

"I wonder if you have forgotten, Miss Bettina, "was his greeting, in a tone that was so lofty it was almost condescending, "certain facts concerning English history that I endeavored to impress upon your understanding yesterday? A very important part of your education, my dear young lady, is to become familiar with the past in order to be through comparison and contrast, more fully equipped to meet the future. You see in me the results that may be obtained through close application to study and research; had I neglected, as I sometimes fear that you are doing, the opportunities for mental advancement that were offered to me, I might have been, instead of what I am," drawing his squatty, awkward figure up to its very average height, and puffing out his cheeks so that his florid countenance looked even broader than it had before, "as ignorant and uninteresting a person as the old woman who, I presume, attended you on the walk from which you have just returned. This person," he went on with increasing scorn, "is as far removed from me intellectually as the Hottentot from the Greek; she is at one end of the scale of humanity, I at the other. Why a being with such pronounced physical char-

acteristics as hers should be associated even remotely with one of my mental attainments is a problem quite beyond my comprehension."

Bettina, with flushed face and exceedingly bright eyes, was about to reply to this tirade when suddenly the door of the library was thrown open, and an angry, flaming face was thrust into the room:

"I know who you mane, you insiniwatin' sneak!" the owner of the face fairly screamed. "If it wasn't that my dear young Miss here is bechune us," for the girl had advanced to the position referred to, as if from instinct, "I'd let you know whether I'm a Hottentot or not!" she stood before him with arms akimbo and sleeves rolled up, and glared at him. "I've half a mind to let some of the blood out of that red nose of yours!" she went on, shaking her fist so near to the object she had just mentioned that the owner of it recoiled and covered it with his hand. "I couldn't spile yer beuty fer ye," she ended, emphatically, "because ye niver had anny to spile! But I could, maybe," she added, as if from an after-thought, advancing again belligerently, "fix that lyin' mouth of yours so that it wouldn't be so quick in speakin' slanderous behind a *lady's* back!"

What the result of this encounter might have been had it been allowed to proceed without interruption cannot now be determined, for just as Bettina had stepped forward and stretched out her hands, with a view to placing a greater distance between the two bitter enemies, a confident, steady step was heard in the hall and a calm, dignified gentleman was standing in the open door of the library. Instantly a hush fell upon all within the room, and the actors in the little

domestic drama stopped as if suddenly petrified:

"What, may I ask," demanded Mr. Wane coolly but searchingly, "is the meaning of the disturbance, the noise of which has drifted across the hall and into my study?" He waited but as no one seemed inclined to enlighten him he went on, "Unseemly wrangling cannot but interfere with the pursuit of my daughter's studies," fixing his gaze severely upon the other man, who cringed beneath it so that old Margaret breathed a sigh of relief and relaxed to some extent the stiffness of her mien, but bridled again as Mr. Wane directly addressed her, "It seems to me that my daughter's personal attendant might be more profitably employed than to be engaged in personal disputes."

Old Margaret acknowledged the justice of the reproach that had been administered to her by going slowly and shamefacedly from the room, bowing low to the master of the house and looking up at him pleadingly as she passed. The tutor began all at once to sort, arrange and carefully examine the books and papers that were scattered on his desk. Having thus restored to the place its accustomed air of orderly quietude Mr. Wane, with scarcely a glance at the girl, who had been a silent but deeply interested spectator of all that had occurred, left the room, as if preoccupied and anxious to resume what had been interrupted.

Left alone with her tutor, Bettina stood beside his desk, as she said:

"If education does not make one kinder and more considerate, of what benefit is it to the world?"

Barney McCoy looked up, and it could be seen that for the moment he was sorely puzzled. But presently, as if secretly recuperated, the look of

self-esteem and self-assurance that was his habitual expression appeared again upon his countenance.

"My dear young lady, there are many matters that are as yet quite beyond the scope of your intelligence; only after years of diligent study could you grasp the abstruse meaning that is attached to what may now seem vague and strange."

Having thus, as he supposed, switched his pupil from the line of thought upon which she had started out, the tutor returned to the profound contemplation of the book that happened to open under his hand, although he had not previously been considering the words spread out upon its pages. In this instance, as in many others, he had not accurately gauged the mind of his pupil.

"Does not education broaden and elevate those who enjoy its advantages?" she asked, looking earnestly and inquiringly at him. "Does not association with great minds, represented by their thoughts as they have been recorded, tend to polish and refine the feelings, as well as the understanding?"

She waited for quite a perceptible time, listening to the rustling of the pages that her teacher rapidly turned as if in search of the answers to her questions. At length, having as it seemed found the clue that had been eluding him; he closed the book and laid it carefully down among the others on his desk; then rising to his feet and pushing the chair that he had been occupying into the open space beneath his desk, he took up a position in the exact centre of the room, and grasping firmly the sharply pointed, fiery beard that adorned the middle of his chin—as if to fortify himself against possible contingencies he took

up the cudgel of conversation that he had so often wielded with telling effect.

"As an intellect advances, my dear young lady," bowing politely to, and at the same time looking grandiloquently upon Bettina, whose calm, interrogative gaze faced him, "along the wide, smooth road that leads to knowledge, there are many by-ways and hedges into which undirected it is apt to stray; it is the work, often sadly unappreciated," sighing and casting down the direction of his eyes as if he had received a blow, "of the pedagogue, to guide the young and inexperienced minds of those who come beneath his care into safe and sheltered paths where they may find ample, wholesome food for thought to feed upon, and where they will be guarded from many dangers to which they would be exposed should they fare forth alone. It has been my privilege, my young friend, "with a retrospective smile, and as if he felt more sure of the ground beneath his feet, "to introduce you to many of those who, through their superior intelligence, have controlled and directed the masses of humanity. In order to accomplish this it has been necessary for me," his cheeks began to puff out, and his color to heighten, "to insist upon your obedience to certain fundamental laws that naturally you, being almost entirely without training before your acquaintance with me," he let go of his beard then, "could not completely understand. Of late it seems that you have broken through the conventional wall that I for your own good have built up around you; and it must be my pleasant task," he went on, rubbing his hands complacently together, "to repair this breach made no doubt unintentionally and through ignorance of probable consequences."

By the time he had concluded these remarks he

was again seated in the chair before his desk, leaning back, and looking about the spacious room with its tiers of well-filled bookshelves, as if his customary self-esteem and most superlative self-assurance had been completely restored to him. He had not taken the trouble to watch very closely the effect of his words upon his auditor, being firmly convinced of their weight and of the power of his own delivery. Now however he included his pupil in his general survey of the contents of the library, and was surprised to discover upon her expressive countenance what he chose to consider as being stubborn resistance to necessary guidance. Under the influence of this astonishing discovery he brought the legs of his chair down upon the floor, and his doubled-up fist down upon his desk.

“We must stick to old, established ideas, and acknowledged precepts and principles! We must refuse to allow extraneous circumstances to interfere with our studies!”

III

Bettina Wane was seldom as happy as when, secure from interruption, she was alone with the books that she loved. They seemed to her to be living entities, as if their authors were really speaking directly to her; she was contented when she was enjoying their society, and she regarded them as her personal friends. She had her favorites among them, but she was an omnivorous reader and there were few well-known English authors with whose work she was not familiar. There were no restrictions placed upon her choice among the many books she found in her father's well-stocked library, unless Barney McCoy's pronounced prejudices for or against certain authors would be considered to be so, and the girl therefore wandered hither and yon, sometimes to far-distant lands, sometimes near at hand, according to the book she was perusing. In imagination these journeys into the unknown were very real to her, and she joyed and suffered with the heroes and heroines with whom she became acquainted through the medium of the pictures that masters in the art of word-painting had left upon their pages. Desdemona seemed to her just as real a woman as old Margaret O'Keefe herself, and Romeo, although so different in every possible particular, was to the girl as much an individual as the opinionated and vainglorious Barney McCoy. She secretly enjoyed thinking of certain human beings as if they bore the names that had been given by some of her favorite authors to their characters; because, as it seemed to her, they

shared the same distinguishing features. She invariably thought of her father as Ivanhoe and there were times when her dear old Margaret seemed to her the exact replica of Sairy Gamp; she often in imagination placed Barney McCoy in a position similar to that occupied by the fiendish schoolmaster Squeers, feeling that under the same conditions her tutor would have displayed the same characteristics. In common with the majority of ambitious young women, she had many dreams as to her possible future.

In order to secure the privacy she coveted it was often necessary for her to resort to diplomatic measures. To begin with old Margaret O'Keefe's garrulous tongue, with its almost ceaseless manipulation of the words at its command, had to be arranged for and properly attended to; there was no way which the girl could really muzzle the old woman even had she been so minded, for at all times and in all places she would blunder boldly on, utterly unmindful of delicate hints as well as sensitive nerves. But Bettina had learned that certain methods intelligently employed had a tendency to reduce and to some extent control the activities of her dependent but officious caretaker. For instance, she was reasonably certain that soon after a hearty meal, under appropriately peaceful conditions, old Margaret would drift, with more or less rapidity and precision, into voiceless although not silent slumber. Having disposed of one obstacle she next had to devise ways and means through which her tutor's manifold energies would be removed from her immediate vicinity. Barney McCoy was, according to his statement, a man of vast resource and almost unlimited talents. Among the latter he claimed that there was no one in England, or for that mat-

ter anywhere in the British Empire, not excepting Canada, India, or any of the far-away possessions who could, single-handed and alone, out-distance, or even come up with himself in a straight, free-for-all, unhandicapped walk. Hence Bettina had only to shrewdly and apparently unintentionally mention that she had somewhere read an account of what to her seemed an almost impossible feat, that a certain person had covered a given number of miles in a given time, always not beyond the range of probability. Having thus cleared the decks of her little boat for action, she would proceed to sail over calm and congenial waters, into what to her was the harbor of contentment. There she happily and dreamily dropped anchor, and rode at ease upon the still and placid surface of an element that was harmonious and satisfying.

One afternoon, having secured through her wits and considerable expert manoeuvring a few hours that she could spend in uninterrupted indulgence of her own personal taste, she was ensconced in her favorite position upon the couch, in one corner of the quiet library, when she heard a quick, light, decisive footstep approaching the door that she had carefully closed. It did not sound like her father's step and so far as she knew there was no one else in the house who would be likely to enter the library at that hour of the day. She leaned forward and listened eagerly—wide, blue eyes, pink cheeks and parted lips although she seemed altogether unaware of the fact, partially because her attention had been almost entirely absorbed by the consideration of objects other than herself, the girl—in the midst of comparatively isolated but perfectly normal and natural surroundings—had grown to be a very beautiful and

attractive young woman. And as she rested there, half-rising, with the toe of one shapely shoe upon the floor, and one hand supporting the weight of her slim body upon the couch, she looked in the dim, suffused light of the shut-in room like a fragrant tropical flower, or a bird of brilliant plumage poised for flight.

And thus it was that Kurk Kaleen, for the first time, beheld her.

Startled to instant action, blushing with surprise that bordered on fright, she rose to her feet when the door was softly opened, and saw a handsome, dark and smiling face such as her eyes had never really seen before, although her keen imagination had many times presented to her inner consciousness a countenance that was as vibrant with strong and manly beauty as the one she saw in that half-opened door.

"I presume you are Miss Bettina Wane," the young man said, advancing with assurance and yet gallant deference until he stood beside her with extended hand. "Your father said he thought that I should find you here."

"Yes," the girl assented, allowing her own hand to rest in his for a few short seconds, "and you, I suppose, are Mr. Kaleen. For my father," she explained, "has told me that he was expecting you to visit him. You will find us, I am afraid," she went on diffidently, "very dull and quiet. We have no near neighbors and very few amusements, at least," she ended, smiling, as if from some sudden recollection, "such as would be apt to interest you."

"I believe that I," the visitor began, daringly yet deferentially allowing his earnest gaze to linger on her fair, flushed face, "in spite of what

you have just said, will not find the time I spend here hanging heavily on my hands."

"Of course," the girl admitted proudly, "my father is most interesting, in every way, our home is very comfortable and the country hereabouts is very beautiful or so it seems to me," qualifying her last statement modestly. "But I," she concluded, "have never been away from home so perhaps my judgment may be biased."

"I am sure," said Kurk Kaleen, his gaze still lingering on her face, "that it is very beautiful indeed. I do not think," his soft, caressing tones were full of music, "that I have ever seen a fairer or a more alluring one than what it has been my privilege to see of it since I came here."

IV

Bettina Wane had never in all her life been happier or more carefree than she was on the afternoon that Kurk Kaleen discovered her. Before that memorable day, for such it was in very many ways, her individuality had lived and moved, hoped and feared, in a world made up of dreams, peopled by imaginary beings who were to her beloved companions and understanding friends. She had been in the society of only her own people when, with the full approval of her natural guardian the current of her daily life was changed. For on that day a pronounced and persistent personality, skilled in the expert handling of all the gifts and graces, endowed by nature with a quick intellect and a handsome face and form, familiar with all the avenues through which the heart of woman may be approached and at the same time possessing in a marked degree the innate cruelty that makes the hunter ruthless, obtruded itself upon her horizon.

The attitude of the girl toward all of the members of her family except one was from that time greatly changed. Urged on by some force of which she was entirely ignorant, she confidently and intuitively related to the young man during the first few hours of her acquaintance with him many little incidents revealing the characteristic peculiarities of all with whom she was closely associated. She told him how she had obtained the privacy in which he had found her and he, fully understanding, laughed boyishly when she recounted

Barney McCoy's egotistic efforts to prove himself champion walker of the British Empire. He also apparently shared with her an affectionate desire to secure the absence yet humor the whims of old Margaret O'Keefe; so far as she was able to determine he as well as herself greatly admired, and somewhat feared, her father's dignified and commanding presence. The one exception to the sympathetic understanding that was established between these two almost at once had to do with the intelligent creature who had been from her roly-poly puppy-hood, the unselfish and admiring companion of Bettina. That afternoon the dog scratched carefully and barked inquiringly at the half-open door of the library and as Bonny came bounding in Bettina felt a change. The dog went immediately to her mistress and laid a long, slim muzzle across her knees, while her great brown eyes, full of insistent adoration and unlimited confidence, looked up into the face upon which she had never seen an expression of stronger disapproval than that of affectionate toleration. The girl looked down upon the golden head that rested on her lap; her hand strayed caressingly over the cool, keen nose, between the beautiful, animated eyes, until it reached the sharp-pointed, slightly-raised, sensitive ears, where it lingered; then she glanced up, intending to introduce her pet to her new acquaintance, expecting that he would share with her in this, as he had in others, her strong and habitual feeling. But the expression that she surprised upon his easily altered features was so lacking in sympathy that it amounted almost to hostility; disappointed and undeniably displeased in this particular, for she realized that she somehow was being placed on the defensive, she allowed her hand to creep down over Bonny's neck so that

it drew her pet still nearer to her; then, having invited the collie to take the place upon the couch beside herself, she hugged and patted her while she looked almost defiantly into the dark and handsome face from which a belligerent expression was just vanishing.

As if reminded of, "Love me, love my dog," the young man leaned forward ingratiatingly and stretched out one of his strong, supple hands, evidently intending to smooth Bonny's long, soft fur. The girl would have welcomed these friendly advances, being pleased to have her pet appreciated, but the dog saw through the thin, polite veneer that Kurk Kaleen had quickly spread above his powerful aversion to her, and not only drew herself away from contact with his hand, but snuggled up close to her mistress and looked at her protectingly. As the man persistently kept getting just a little nearer to them both, the gentle creature bared her teeth, and came as near to growling as she had ever allowed herself to do.

Bettina was amazed and just a little alarmed at this strange attitude on the part of the collie, but what she saw in her dog's tender eyes only made her more assured than ever of Bonny's unswerving and affectionate devotion to herself.

"Perhaps when Bonny gets to know you well you two will be great friends." Her face was flushed and anxious. "She is not used to seeing strangers," apologetically, "and I presume she was surprised to find that you were here."

"Someone else is about to be surprised," declared the young man joyfully, as if well pleased at the prospect of a change in the subject to be discussed. "I think I hear a woman's step."

Shuffling sleepily into the room and up to the

couch that with its occupants directly faced the door, old Margaret volubly began:

"If iver I drop aslake, Miss, darlin'," as if it were a most unusual happening, "I'm purty sure to find you here whin I wake up. I've had a most distressin' drame. . . ." which she was evidently about to relate when she suddenly realized that they were not alone and, without waiting for an introduction but directly addressing the visitor, she continued, "It do be seemin' quare to me, young sir, but," stepping a little nearer to him in order evidently to more closely examine his features, "if that little brown mole on your left cheek," Kurk Kaleen hastily pressed a finger against the cheek referred to, "was only jist a little higher up, an' 'twas yer left eyelid instead of bein' the right wan, that droops down," both of his eyes became at once very wide open, "ye wud look enough like Patrick McGranahan's nixt to the oldest b'y to be his own blood-brother."

Bettina, much embarrassed for the lack of courtesy just shown her father's guest, stepped forward and placing one hand on the arm of her old nurse was about to formally present her when she was interrupted in an explosive but not altogether unexpected manner.

"My dear young lady," announced Barney McCoy, unmindful of everything except the presence of his pupil, "you see before you one who has not only equaled—but even excelled the feat concerning the accomplishment of which you were so much astonished."

V

Kurk Kaleen's father and Walter Wane had been companions in their boyhood, and had all through their lives continued the acquaintance begun when they were children. The visit the young man was making in the home of his father's friend was in his father's stead, as he had sent the boy there to attend to certain matters concerning which the two older men had been carrying on a correspondence. The work upon which they were engaged, of a clerical and reference nature, required the entire attention of Bettina's father as well as that of his visitor during the forenoons, when usually Bettina herself was either attending to the domestic affairs of the household, of which as her father's daughter she was general manager, or receiving the instructions and listening to the dicta with more or less benefit of her inoffensive tutor. After luncheon, when generally speaking the two young people would meet for the first time in the day, there were several comparatively idle and usually most enjoyable hours.

After the advent of a decidedly attractive and at the same time entirely eligible young man, old Margaret O'Keefe's officious interference and perpetual surveillance were more difficult to suppress than they had been even before his arrival. But Bettina now had an intelligent and very capable assistant in the work that she had for some time been conducting without other aid. When it became advisable to isolate the energies of Barney McCoy her resourceful and very will-

ing helper, without urging or even suggestion on her part, would attend to the matter thoroughly and speedily. One day the young man, bent upon accomplishing the object he had in view, became involved in an argument that bade fair to be too lengthy for the purpose which was his reason for entering into it.

"Well," he said, rising to his feet, "it may well be, and probably is, just as you say, for I am well aware of the fact that your experience—in this instance as well as in many others—is much broader and has extended over a considerably longer period of years than my own. However," he ended, with a laudable desire to symmetrically complete the line of thought upon which he had started out, "it seems to me that in order to conclusively prove the truth of the statement that you have just made, it might be well for us at some time in the future to take this matter up again."

"My time," declared Barney McCoy, "is not only very valuable, but very far from being always at my own disposal according to the terms of the agreement binding and holding the parties thereto. Although at times," looking patiently down, "I must confess that it is a very irksome duty to devote my entire attention to the intellectual advancement of one who is often very unappreciative who even at times goes so far as to ridicule what should receive her most profound consideration. But this," he interpolated condescendingly, "is no doubt due to the levity of youth. Nevertheless," he ended kindly, "she is a good girl, whose attainments reflect great credit upon her instructor."

"My dear young friend," went on the speaker as if from some great height, "if at any time in

your future life you should feel inclined to doubt the wisdom of divine Providence—because you have been placed in some certain position, or surrounded by any certain set of circumstances, or compelled to be associated with any certain set of individuals; or forced to undergo any certain set of conditions”—making a sweeping gesture with his one free hand, for he was clinging closely to his beard with the other—“always remember it has been your privilege to meet, and to some slight extent become acquainted with a man who in spite of having acquired independently and without assistance most stupendous stores of practical knowledge such as others,” his watery eyes had taken on a sort of glassy stare, “have spent all their lives in laboring diligently and painstakingly, although entirely without success, to attain—in spite of having had and fully taken advantage of colossal opportunities for mental development, has adjusted himself with resignation, even with cheerful acquiescence, to a mediocre and at times almost”—a stricken, abused expression as if he had received an undeserved rebuke began to settle slowly over his features, so that they seemed to sag down under the weight of it—“a menial.”

His auditor up to this point had found no crevice in the solid wall by which he could hope to extricate himself from the flow of language in which he had been engulfed. Just here, mercifully, there was the sound of a slight, swift scuffle, as if one person were trying to hold another one back outside the door of the library where the colloquy was taking place. Then the door itself was rudely and unceremoniously shaken as if by an angry hand. After that events took place too rapidly to admit of giving any one of them precedence over any of the others. Old Margaret

appeared, both of the witnesses already in the room were sure of that, but the identity of whatever it was that she was dragging in with her remained uncertain for some little time. This uncertainty was due mainly to the fact that the old woman was gyrating much in the manner of a top and at the same time vociferously demanding that she be given redress for some insult that, as she claimed, she had been subjected to.

"Ye will, will ye?" she screamed. "Ye think because I'm a lone widdy, widout a man to lift a fist fer me, ye can say what ye plaze!" At this juncture, being almost entirely out of breath by reason of her manifold exertions, she paused abruptly and so revealed the fact that the object in her clutches was a small, disheveled, nondescript yet human being who, now that he had a chance to set his feet upon the floor, tried to straighten up and jerk himself away. But the old woman was not yet through with him and his resistance only added to her wrath. "No, indade! Ye'll not escape me till I'm good and done wid ye! Ye'll git down on yer dirty knees here now an' take back ivry word ye iver said ferninst me, in the prisence of this gintleman," indicating Kurk Kaleen with one stubby finger. "There! Now!" shoving her victim forcibly down until he assumed the supplicating position she wished him to take, "Go on, ye dirty-mouthed. . . ."

But just at that moment, Bettina, anxious, wondering and very beautiful, came hastily into the room.

"Margaret, dear," she said deprecatingly, "Margaret, what has happened?"

Seeing her evident distress the old woman's anger fell away from her like a garment laid aside, and she forcibly dropped the bone of contention.

“Nothing at all, at all, Miss, darlin’,” she whispered. “Nothing to bring a single tear into the bright blue eyes av ye, or to make a single bit of color lave yer swate face!”

VI

"I want to ask you, Bettina," said Kurk Kaleen one day when for a short time the two young people happened to be alone, "if you do not sometimes long to see the world outside of your own home?"

She looked at him frankly and wonderingly, and after a moment's hesitation replied: "I have been very happy and contented here. I think perhaps," blushing and at the same time smiling, "that I should be afraid if I went very far away from home."

"Do you think that you would be afraid," his tones were full of deep, repressed emotions, "with someone strong and capable and loving always at your side?"

A thrilling consciousness of something that she did not understand yet felt the force of caused her pure young lips to tremble with an unknown but a most exquisite joy, so that she did not find it easy to reply. But soon her inborn pride and natural dignity came to her aid, and gazing earnestly into the speaking dark eyes that were searchingly regarding her, she said:

"I wonder if anyone who would be strong and capable could be, always loving too! That is, I mean," as if she feared the statement she had made might seem too comprehensive, "supposing that the person who would otherwise be all alone—and very much afraid—were just an ordinary, not at all unusual human being—" Her eyelids drooped until her long, dark lashes brushed her blushing cheeks as falteringly she added, "Of

course, it would make one feel very safe if such a thing could really be, to have someone strong and capable and always loving, too, right beside one."

"There is someone," he whispered, drawing very near to her to say it so that she felt the magnetism of his presence, "who has been often called both strong and capable, and who is I am certain very loving," and then his hand, gently, softly, reverently, barely touched the thick brown hair that grew luxuriantly above her smooth white brow, "who would be always at your side if you desired to have him there. But if you never could, Bettina," he spoke her name caressingly, "when you have known me long enough, learn to love me," sadly, "still, I should always love and long for you."

He stopped and allowed the words to have their full effect. The girl was silent, partly through surprise and partly because waves of powerful and to her unimaginable emotions were sweeping over her. He watched her eagerly, trying to determine what effect the declaration of his love had had upon her; his dark eyes glowed like living lamps, for in them was the light of passionate and yet adoring love. At length, when her white lids were lifted, he quietly compelled her eyes to meet the light that glowed within his own; her sweet lips quivered as if they were about to speak the words that trembled on her tongue. Fearing that they would not be the ones he wished to hear, Kurk Kaleen suddenly and to himself most unexpectedly grew humble and appealing.

"If you would be my wife, Bettina," his rich voice lingering upon the three short syllables, "I should only live to make you happy. All that I have, dear one, would be at your command. I

would withhold nothing. Your wish would be law. When you will give yourself to me," his arms went out to her in unexpressed, involuntary, ardent invitation, "I shall protect you always, I shall shield you." He waited, and tenderness enfolded her.

Bettina's blue eyes looked straight at him, then, and in their clear depths he saw surprise, amazement, merging into affectionate and fervent admiration:

"How can you, who have only known me for a few short days, be certain that you have for me," she spoke with quiet dignity and womanly reserve, "the feelings that the words you have just used would lead me to suppose?"

This was a new experience for him; the women he had known thus far had not been loath to accept admiration. The ground he saw before him was to him entirely unbroken, untried, virgin soil, and fearing that he might if he went forward make some blunder that perhaps would be altogether irretrievable, he decided that in this case at least discretionary measures would serve his purpose better than to deal too hastily.

"There is no accounting," he began, regarding her seriously and studiously, "for the birth or even for the rapid growth of sincere love. Sentiments that precede, accompany and lead up to the divine passion are so complicated and so diversified that no satisfactory explanation can be offered. What would appeal powerfully to one person might not in any way affect another. Of course," he smilingly compromised, and he had a most engaging smile, "there are certain characteristic conditions that are almost absolutely essential to the continued existence of any steadfast, mutual love. The two who love each other," as

he said these words his eyes caressed her, "must have mutual tastes and mutual ambitions; they must have the same or similar desires; they must find enjoyment under the same or similar conditions; in almost every case there must be strength on one side, and beauty," gazing at her face adoringly, "upon the other. No two people can really love each other unless they are of the same class, upon the same plane of human existence, with—ordinarily speaking—the same degree of general education, social standing, and refinement. There might be marked exceptions to this rule, isolated instances of mutual, immutable regard that has bound together two beings of exactly opposite natures and utterly dissimilar tastes. But two people who are as much alike as you and I, in very many ways, and yet as different in very many other ways, are much more apt to spend long lives of sweet content and happiness together than those who are not as we are."

During all of this rather long and roundabout reply the young man had been studying carefully the open countenance of the girl whose confidence he hoped to gain. But in spite of his undoubted ability in this one particular line of research which was the result of his somewhat long and decidedly complex social career, he was not at all prepared to hear the words Bettina uttered.

"You speak of love as if it were a growth," she said, calmly and speculatively, "as if it could be built up, somehow, between two human beings . . . what then do you think is the foundation or beginning of the structure you call love?"

He could not answer her explicitly in words.

"This!" he cried, seizing in his two strong hands both of her own, "and this!" imprinting on the backs, and on the palms, and on the fingers

of his two soft, white, fluttering but unresisting prisoners a multitude of warm and clinging kisses, "this, and this!"

The last one of them all he tucked away with delicate and most respectful care among the brown braids of her heavy hair, then drew her very near so that he held her hands against his breast. And as she felt the throbbing of his heart he saw a look of startled wonder and of sweet, yielding understanding begin to grow within her eyes.

VII

One morning as Bettina and old Margaret, with Bonny in attendance, started out upon their customary walk, they were joined by Kurk Kaleen, who searched as eagerly as any of them for the wild flowers that they hoped to find.

Old Margaret O'Keefe found the first slender milkmaid where the thin, white flower was hiding just beneath the hedge, and as she brought it to Bettina she declared:

"It do be very pale and worn, darlin'. It minds me of a gurrhl I used to know. She was a milkmaid too an' most as slim as this wan here. Her name was Rose O'Brady an' she niver knew a real well day in all her life, an' all because her mither, whin Rose was a wee wan, took her out wan day an' laid her down upon the grass, among the sheets that she was whitenin'. Layin' her on the grass wud niver have done her anny harm, but whin she laid her down she niver looked to see what was underneath the grass an' so the careless mither laid her wee wan down right where a stone had been sunk in the ground, although the sod had covered it all over, to mark the spot where Andy Callahan had fought anither man until the blood of both of thim had dhripped—dhripped—down, an' soaked the sile.'" She stopped for breath and looked at her audience to see if her recital had made the proper impression upon them, but as neither seemed serious she added, "No wan should iver lay a wee wan down where angry men have spilled each ither's blood, because it takes away from the wee wan as much

blood as has dhripped down on the ground. An', shure," she ended sadly, "poor Rose O'Brady always had to suffer for her mither's carelessness; if she hadn't laid her down above that stone, she might have been a plump and happy gurrhl."

"But, Margaret," said Bettina, when the old woman had finally come to the end of her narrative, "do you really think that Rose O'Brady was so slim and pale because her mother laid her down upon the grass, above that stone?"

"Miss" said old Margaret, who was never backward in making explanations to her own "wee wan," as she still considered Bettina, "ye are young an' lackin' in experience; manny's the toime I've thried to make things plain and simple, so ye'd understan' thim. But now that ye are older and more sinsible ye ought to see the truth of things the same as I do. Ye see, whin Rose O'Brady's mither laid her down there where the ground had once been wet wid blood, her wee, soft, warrm body felt the same to it as the blood had whin it dhripped—drhipped—down. An' so the ground, not knowin' the difference bechune thim, jist took a dhrink of Rose O'Brady's blood, an bein' as she hadn't much to begin wid it stunted her, an' she could niver in her life make up for what the ground had took away, whin she was sich a wee wan. She didn't have the strength to spare."

Bettina smiled at her indulgently when she had finished "making plain and simple" the story she had told, and then she turned to Kurk Kaleen and said:

"Margaret has taken tender care of me ever since I was as little as Rose O'Brady must been when that sad accident befell her."

"And it is very evident," the young man said,

following the lead the girl had given him, "that she was always particular as to where she laid you down, when you were too small to decide such matters for yourself."

"Dade an' I was always careful of her, whin she was a wee wan!" exclaimed the old woman, looking fondly at her youthful charge. "An' whin I can no longer do for her, I will be ready thin to lave this worrld!"

"You must stay here, dear," Bettina's voice was very tender and her gentle hand was laid upon the other woman's shoulder, "just as long as I do."

"That will not likely be, me, darlin'," Margaret replied, wiping tears of joy from her eyes with the corner of her apron, "for ye are young, an' I am auld, but jist as long as I'll be let to stay here, annywheres, I'll stay wid ye, no matter where ye go or who else there is by ye." And looking straight to Kurk Kaleen she added, "I was as near to bein' a mither to her, sir, as annyone so different could be. Whin her own mither was about to leave her she said to me, for I was standin' by her bed wid her wee wan, darlin', here, layin' in me arrms, 'Be always near her Margaret.' An' thin, 'the tears she wiped away this time were tears of sorrow,' the young thing died and left her wee wan mitherless, but first she give to her the quare, Eyetalyan name that she has now. A sweet, good gurrhl the mither was but," shaking her head, "she'd been away in furrin' parts an' read a lot of furrin' books, an' so she had some quare ideas."

"But, dear," Bettina said, "my foreign name has never been a burden to you, for you have not used it much."

"An' ye will always be to me," her old nurse

laughingly agreed, "jist only my Miss darlin'. My Oirish tongue wud never twist itself aroun' a name that has so much Eyetalyan to it."

"My tongue is Irish, too," said Kurk Kaleen, bestowing his engaging smile upon the old nurse and her charge as well, "and yet I find that I can say Bettina," lingering lovingly over the name, "very well."

"Yours is an eddicated Oirish tongue," old Margaret argued, "an' mine is only jist the way that it was give me. But Oirish hearts," she went on, proudly, "don't need much eddicatin' to be only jist the warrmest an' the lovinest of all the hearts in all the wide, endurin' world, an' mine," she ended, "belongs to her—"

The young man scrutinized Bettina's face earnestly and speculatively, and for a long moment silence rested upon the little group. Old Margaret realized the tenseness of the mental atmosphere, but the gentle hand that still rested on her shoulder patted her reassuringly; Bonny came, and thrust her long, slim muzzle beneath the free hand of her young mistress. At length, as if he had decided definitely as to what course he would pursue, Kurk Kaleen advanced and was about to lay his hand upon Bettina's arm, but Bonny, with her white teeth bared, stood there between them, and in the collie's gentle eyes there gleamed a baleful fire that made him pause. The girl instantly, and for her sharply, reproved her pet. The dog turned her golden head supplicatingly toward her and waved the plume-like tail, but did not yield an inch. Thus they stood, man and dog, and eyed each other. At last the man stepped back, for he had wisely arrived at the conclusion that it would be best for him, to do so. Bonny resumed her place at the side of her young

mistress, and listened quietly, while the young man said:

“Yours is not the only Irish heart,” starting out by addressing the old nurse, “that belongs to Miss Bettina. That is,” his gaze found the young girl’s face and lingered there, “in case she wishes to possess it.” The face his gaze had found was blushing now. “It’s lying there, upon the ground before her feet,” the blush had made him daring, “and if she cares to keep it all she has to do is to stoop down,—and pick it up.”

VIII

"There was once," began old Margaret when one day Bettina, idly thinking to please her old nurse, asked her for a story, "a gurrhl who looked enough like you to be yer own twin sister. But her name was only jist plain Betty instid of bein' what yer own name is. She had a lover an' he was a handsome, black-eyed, curly-headed b'y wid a name almost as square an' furrin-like as yer name is. Instid of bein' a Eyetalyan name it was Frinch an' was as near like Jake as annythin' cud be an' not be it, at all, at all. I never cud pernounce it, an' so I come as near to it as I cud come, an' called him Jake fer short.

"Wan day Jake fell ferninst anither man as baith of thim were walkin' up the street, and baith of thim were only jist a wee bit tipsy. Jake had only jist returned from furrin parts an' brought some square, strong, furrin liquor wid him. It made the ither man so mad that he commenced to call Jake names an' thin Jake knocked him down. An' there they were, the baith of thim a wee bit tipsy, fightin' in the street, whin who should come along but Betty, all dressed up, as clane an' nate as if she had but only jist stepped out of a new band-box!"

This was the crisis, leading on to the conclusion of the old woman's story, and Bettina seemed both properly amazed and interested, for she had listened to many and knew what was expected of her. "An' thin," old Margaret's voice was trembling, and her eyes were very wide, for she always acted out some parts of the stories, "Miss Betty

walked up to her lover, who had a name that was so furrin I always called him Jake, and said to him, spakin' very low so that the ither feller cud not hear her, 'Niver again,' she almost hissed it in his ear, 'will I be seen wid you!' An' the nixt toime he saw her she was ridin' in her carriage, wid a footman, an' a coachman an' a coat of arrms!"

After the old nurse had quite concluded the story about Betty and her lover, Jacques, she said to her young charge impressively: "Black-eyed, curly-headed lovers sometimes do be doin' very quare and onixpicted things. They are not always to be trusted, darlin'. 'Tis thrue they do be handsome an' enticin', an' whin a gurrhl is very young an' innercint 'tis hard for her to understand how black deceivin' they kin be." It was very evident that she was not thinking of Jacques but of another dark-eyed lover when she added sadly and apprehensively, "I'm an auld woman, an' I have seen manny gurrhls as young and maybe jist as swate, to thim that love thim, as you be. But niver did I see a gurrhl as smart as you be an' yit as innercint. Ye cud be fooled, an' ye've got no wan but me, a ignerent, wake, auld woman. An' Bonny, an' she is but a dog, although a quick-sinsed, faithful creature to stan' bechune ye an' a darkeyed an' allurin' feller who's got the manners of a gintleman, the beauty of a angel from Hiven itself—an', for all I know, me darlin'," she whispered the last statement and looked cautiously around them when she made it, "the wiles of Satan himsilf."

"Margaret," Bettina said affectionately and yet with dignity, "you must always remember that Mr. Kaleen is my father's guest, and came into our home upon his invitation."

"I do be remimberin' that, but I'll be afther askin' ye wan question. What does the master of this house," she did not hesitate to speak whatever came into her mind to her wee wan, "know about what's goin' on widin' it?"

The girl looked at her old nurse tolerantly but did not answer her. Instead she changed the subject altogether.

"My tutor said today, Margaret, dear, that he thought he would soon be leaving here. But," she hastened to add, for a look of unholy joy began to spread itself upon old Margaret's face, "only for a time, as he intends to return after a short vacation. He says," she went on amusedly, "that he is much in need of relaxation because of the strenuous efforts he has been making in behalf of my intellectual advancement. It seems," she ended, putting her brown head down upon the old woman's ample lap, for she was reclining on a low hassock beside the chair in which her old nurse was sitting, "that the conduct of my education is very difficult."

"It do be seemin'," admitted old Margaret, although as could be plainly seen it was much against her will, "that Barney McCoy has a lot of book eddication, for he do be teachin' my wee wan," her crooked old fingers by this time gently stroking the soft brown hair that was beneath them, "some big, quare words the manin' of which is dark to me. An' yit," as if she felt they were resting on a sure foundation, "somehow it niver seems to me I ought to be correctin' ye for usin' thim. But, as to his relaxin'," leaving behind her what she did not understand, and with it the respect that the mental attainments of the, to her, objectionable tutor forced her to give him, "he sure do be needin' that if iver anny man cud iver

need it, for niver anny human bein' as far as my experience goes, an' I am an auld woman, an' have seen manny human beings, was iver as stiff, an' high-headed an' prideful as be he! An' whin he's away, darlin'," unconsciously revealing one reason why she did not like the tutor, "we will be more togither than we are whin he is here. It do be seemin'," the tenderness that was beneath the thick mask of her untrained sentences leaped out, and stood before and quite concealed them, "that ivry bone in your swate body is jist as dear to me as whin yer dyin' mither—may she rest in peace—towld me she trusted ye to me. An' if," she ended, while her dim old eyes grew fierce with the fierceness of protecting and maternal love, "anny man or anny woman should thry to do ye harm, the first thing that wud stan' bechune ye an' the divilment wud be yer poor auld Margaret's heart, and after that, although I might seem wake, I'd back ye up in annything ye'd thry to do, for you," softly smoothing the pulsing, glowing velvet of her wee wan's cheek, "have grown to be a woman now, an' are knowin' manny things that yer auld Margaret wud niver have success in larnin'."

"Margaret, dear," said the girl, resting her folded arms upon the older woman's lap and raising her head, so that she looked directly up into the eyes that lovingly regarded her, "you told me long ago that I must never cross a bridge until I reached it, and here you are imagining things that never happened, making yourself suffer on account of them! We are so safe and happy here, just you and I and Bonny, and with my father," pronouncing the word with great respect, "who is always near if we should really require his counsel. It seems to me we ought to be contented and count our blessings over instead of fearing

things we have not seen and planning what we both would do."

Old Margaret's eyes were full of unshed tears, and Bonny snuggled closer to the one whose arm still rested on her neck. But as Bettina ceased to speak the old nurse said: "It's jist as safe and swate here now as you have towld it, but what I am afeared of is that it will not be lastin'."

IX

The absence of Barney McCoy gave to Kurk Kaleen many opportunities that would not otherwise have offered. The hours Bettina had been in the habit of spending in the library under the espionage of her officious teacher were still spent in the presence of the written words of many authors, but under quite a different tutelage than that of her self-absorbed, self-admiring but harmlessly frank, awkward and unattractive tutor. She was gradually and almost altogether coming more and more beneath the glamorous and bewitching spell that Kurk Kaleen was using every means at his command to throw about her.

One day, after the two young people had been together in the library for some time, the young man suddenly, and without apparently preliminary preparation, inquired: "Are you so much attached to your old nurse that, in case you should decide to change your place of residence, you would wish to take her with you?"

Bettina looked at him, with mild amazement plainly written on her frank, expressive features.

"Margaret is so much a part of my life," she answered, "that I can hardly contemplate the one without the other. If for any reason we should leave our home here—which does not seem at present to be very likely—she would of course accompany us."

"I did not mean to ask what you would do if you should leave here with your father, Bettina," his dark eyes compelled her to look into them. "I wanted to know what you will do when you

leave here with your husband." The light that gave his passionate, magnetic gaze its power had found an answering flame within her eyes, for her white lids, as if to draw a shielding curtain, began to droop. "Of course you will sometime, and that time I hope is not far distant, be the mistress of a home that is really your own. And when you leave here," the flush of youth and health that usually mantled her soft cheeks had disappeared, "to enter that home," the color came tumultuously back into her face, "will you, I wonder, care to take your old nurse with you?"

A picture of old Margaret O'Keefe, desolate, left behind, shambling wearily about, sitting beside the empty bed, wandering in loneliness along the dear, familiar paths where they had walked, swept before the inner consciousness of the tender-hearted girl, and she cried out impulsively:

"Of course she would go with me! How could I have any happiness knowing that she who cared for me when I was helpless and has loved me all my life, was suffering and unhappy?" Her blue eyes flashed with swift and certain condemnation, for the one she was condemning was her imaginary self. "Why, her whole existence is bound up with mine! It would be like committing murder for me to go away and leave her here! I don't see how you could, "for the first time in their acquaintance she looked at him reproachfully, "even think of such a thing!"

He saw that he had gone too far, at least for the time being, and he diplomatically avoided during the balance of that day mentioning either old Margaret's name, or the radical change that he intended would very soon take place in the life of her youthful charge.

The young man was a practiced, fluent and very

capable interpreter of written words. Reading aloud was an accomplishment in which he had had much training and one of his principal methods of attack upon a woman's heart had been to shield his own feelings behind, while apparently expressing them through dramatic scenes in which passionate human love had been graphically, artistically and yet naturally portrayed by those who had epitomized upon the printed pages the entire gamut of earthly emotions. In this way it had been possible for him to definitely discover the true feelings of the one he was at the time endeavoring to influence, and yet reserve until he should choose to reveal them, his own real sentiments.

They had been discussing the works of English novelists and Bettina had declared that among them all the one that most thoroughly understood and vividly described the emotions of the human heart was a writer who, although a woman, chose to use the name of a man—George Eliot. Accordingly, with "The Mill on the Floss" in his hand, the man seated himself beside the girl and with unerring accuracy, as if he had been guided by some mysterious power that was in collusion with him, turned almost instantly to the pages upon which, with masterly artistry, the delineation of Stephen Guest's impetuous declaration of his love for Maggie Tulliver is made. As he read the thrilling sentences his rich, expressive voice vibrated with the feeling that was in them, and Bettina listening to the words of the author somehow almost thought that she herself was Maggie Tulliver, and that he whose voice she heard was Stephen Guest. His eyes now even darker than their wont, from time to time were lifted from the pages, and with compelling mag-

netism drew her gaze until her eyes, their blue depths dark like clear, unfathomed pools, were looking straight into his own. Once, as he held her spellbound thus, one of his hands, as if without volition, went out and covered lovingly one of hers that like a little soft, white dove was resting on her lap.

"Dear little girl, you know I love you, utterly. You asked me once how I could be sure, having known you for so short a time. "He was by this time holding both of her hands between both of his, for hers were resting like two willing prisoners upon one of his hands, with the other over them." I'll tell you now one of the reasons I love you. I've hunted for—and never found until I came here—a certain woman, one who would be true as steel no matter what misfortunes would befall or enemies assail me, one whose love and understanding sympathy would never fail, whose pity would wrap itself around me like a warm, soft, shielding cloak so that sickness, sorrow, even disgrace itself could not really touch or harm me—and *you!* Bettina, little innocent unsullied girl," his hands were fairly clinging now to hers, "are the woman for whom I have been searching." "You know now," he ended, rising and lifting her so that, hands clasped, they faced each other, "one reason why I love you!"

X

Walter Wane as a rule saw very little of his household. He had made careful provisions for his daughter's education as well as for her personal well-being after his young wife's untimely death, and he withdrew from the outside world, devoting himself almost entirely to certain lines of research in order to distract his mind from what he considered the ruin of his earthly hopes. Connection with the social circle in which he formerly moved was kept up only through correspondence and the decidedly infrequent visits between himself and his old-time friends. Kurk Kaleen's father was one who had never allowed the solitary man to drift out of the range of direct communication, and had from time to time during the past twenty years visited him in his secluded home. Although he had in this way met and very rarely conversed with his old friend's daughter, he had not considered it incumbent upon himself to talk with his son concerning her. Hence, the latter was quite unprepared and much surprised to find a matured, self-possessed beautiful young woman in the library on the day that her father had sent him there.

One day Bettina went into her father's study while his young visitor was in consultation with him to ask about some household matter concerning which she was in need of his advice. There was a quick exchange of glances between the two young people, and the involuntary blush that swept over his daughter's face made the older man realize for the first time that the little girl had reached a marriageable age. Closely following this know-

ledge came the possibility of an alliance with the son of a man whom he himself had always liked and respected. This idea was pleasing in more ways than one. He had never really known his daughter very well, and instead of to some extent filling the place that her mother's death had left vacant in his heart, her presence seemed a constant and not a consoling reminder of his own irreparable loss. Knowing that so far as wealth, refinement and social standing went the young man's family was beyond reproach, realizing that the young man himself, so far as he was able to judge, was one of whom he might be proud, and being well aware that his daughter, in case a union between herself and his young visitor should be effected, would be well provided for, the discovery that he made soon after the girl's appearance in his study was rather gratifying.

After he had advised with his daughter Mr. Wane looked at her earnestly and said: "I trust you are spending your time profitably, Bettina, during the absence of your tutor. While he is rather peculiar," he went on, addressing the young man, as well as the girl, "he is nevertheless perfectly reliable and very capable, being trustworthy in every particular and really well-educated, although his pronounced egoism makes it sometimes rather difficult to comprehend the fact."

"If one may judge by results," Kurk Kaleen declared, smilingly regarding Barney McCoy's pupil, "It seems to me that Miss Bettina's tutor must be, beyond question extraordinary."

The girl's fair face was suffused with blushes, not so much on account of the words as because of the expressive glances that had accompanied and preceded them. Her father regarded her

quietly and seriously, and at length remarked: "I have always considered, my daughter, that you resembled very closely my side of our family; but today it seems to me that I can begin to see traces of your mother's charming beauty in your face."

The young man joined his senior in gazing seriously upon the countenance in question, and the girl her sweet lips trembling and her blue eyes humid—looked timidly from one to the other showing plainly that she respected as well as admired both her father and his visitor. At length she spoke and her young voice had in its tones a sound that is so seldom found on earth that, when its music falls on human hearing, the hearers, no matter how engaged they may be at the time, pause and listen.

"I've always hoped," looking directly into her father's face, "that I would grow to be at least a little like my mother, because I thought," she hesitated and looked down, but finally went bravely on, "that maybe, if I did," her gaze again was concentrated upon Mr. Wane, "you might perhaps begin to care for me."

"Bettina," began her father, shaken out of his habitual reserve by the knowledge that she understood the true state of his feelings toward her, "I have always tried to be to you what, as it has seemed to me, a father should be to a daughter."

"There is no doubt," she answered proudly, retiring as was her usual custom when in his presence, within herself, "that you have fully met every obligation placed upon you. I beg your pardon if I have seemed presumptuous in what I have just said. I do not often," she ended diffidently and as if she wished to excuse herself for a misdemeanor, "speak from impulse. And I am well aware that I should never do so."

"Perhaps we may," her father said rising and drawing near to where she stood, for she was about to leave the room, "after this frank understanding become better acquainted with each other than we have ever been."

Her eyes were raised and looked into his questioningly. Brought so near to each other, there was a strong resemblance. The young man, who had been watching all that passed, observed this similarity and always afterward remembered it.

As Bettina left the room, he turned toward his host and said: "I hope you will not think that I am hasty, Sir, in what I am about to say. For some time, I have wished to speak to you about a matter that is to me of the gravest importance, for my whole future hinges upon the outcome. I love your daughter, Mr. Wane," he rose and stood, tall, handsome, virile, before the other man, "devotedly, and I desire above everything else in this world or in any other world to have her for my wife. You know already," practically and reasonably, as if he felt that his credentials would meet with his auditor's approval, "the conditions by which I am surrounded, and I do not suppose that you will require other recommendation as to my veracity and ability to make my way than the one that my father will be overjoyed to give to you, for I feel certain, that the proposal that I am about to make would meet with his entire approval.

"I ask you sir," he ended formally, "for your daughter's hand in marriage."

XI

One morning not long after the events narrated, there was a knock, not loud and yet insistent, upon the door of Mr. Wane's study. He listened a moment, and as the knock was almost instantly repeated and also emphasized, he rose, and going to the door put his hand upon the knob, when suddenly it was pushed open so that it was necessary for him to step back quickly in order to avoid collision with it. Bursting in upon him, for she had to "work herself up," as she expressed the mental preparations she had made in order to have sufficient courage to come at all, old Margaret O'Keefe appeared.

"I could not slape last night, sir, an' shure whin I did I dramed such drames as waked me up!" she began, taking up a position in front of the chair in which he had again seated himself. "'Twas borne to me, come mornin', that you and I should talk things over bechune ourselves, wid-out me darlin' knowin' anything about it, for she is only jist a wee wan yit in very manny ways an' I an auld woman. An' you," looking at him daringly, "although you hav'n't often acted much as if you were, are yit her father.

"Darlin' is at prisent in a most peculiar fix. I'm wid her almost all the time," she explained, noticing the look of astonishment on his features, "an' so I do be knowin' manny things that thim as niver is wid her at all might maybe do well if they would be afther thryin' to find out. My wee wan's heart" is bein' caught, like manny ither swate wild, innercint young things have been, wid-

out her knowin' what it is that makes her want to go intil the trap now bein' set for her. Darlin', is young an' strong an' beautiful; it may not be that you have noticed, sir, how beautiful she is. She's growin' ivery day to look more like her mither, sir, an' thin, she's niver been away from home. She is as innercent but not so knowin' as her mither, and could be fooled, sir, by what her mither would have seen right through. For she, an' may she rest in pace," looking down reverently, "although she was so young, was wiser than manny who are aulder.

"Darlin', sir, has niver even seen a man excipt yourself until jist lately, for no wan in his right mind wud say that that spalpeen who sthruts aroun' an' says that he's a man so manny times, was raily what he says. You can see yourself, sir, she's niver had a bit of trainin' as to what to do wid men. 'Tis true! she's read a lot in books about baith men and women, but men inside of books, as nigh as I can make thim out," old Margaret had never read a whole book through in all her life, having great difficulty in "making out" a single line of printed matter, "are very different *indade* from thim that are outside of thim. An' this wan who's here now is far from bein' shut up in a book. He's only jist as much alive as annything I iver saw; he's handsome an' allurin', too, an' that makes it all the harder on me darlin', for whin a man is handsome an' allurin' an' a woman is young an' strong an' beautiful, it makes it hard on baith of thim to have good sinse. She's a swate, good girl, sir, as swate an' clane an' good a girl as ever lived, for I have brought her up mesilf an' know what I be tellin' of, but" the old woman ended, looking at Mr. Wane knowingly, "she could be fooled, sir—she could be fooled."

"The young man to whom you are referring, Margaret," Bettina's father's tones were serious if not severe, "has asked me for my daughter's hand in marriage, and if he should gain her consent as well as mine—for I have given it, knowing his antecedents very well—why then of course she will become his wife. I think," reflectively, "that his intentions are entirely honorable."

"I don't know annything at all, at all," declared old Margaret, "ferninst his anties or his uncles. The baith of thim may be all right for all I know, but he's the only handsome and allurin' lover the girlie's iver had. The dog, who is a quick-sinsed, lovin' creature, won't make up wid him; an' I, who love her like her mither would have done, sir, or like I would have loved my own wee wan, can't bear to see him put his hand ferninst her little fingers. But if I thought that bein' his wife wud make her happy, why thin ye'd niver hear a peep from poor old Margaret no matter what she suffered. I wud go wid her, sir, an' stay wid her through thick and thin, but I don't feel, somehow, sir, that she wud be happy! An' Bonny won't make up wid him, an' dogs is often wiser, sir, than they are given credit for. An' I can't slape because I am afraid darlin's bein' fooled. Whin I do slape," she ended, shuddering so that her heavy body shook as with an ague, "I drame such drames as wake me up agin."

"I think that we will let these matters take their natural course." Bettina's father had decided that the old woman's superstitious notions were not worth considering. "My daughter is a woman now and has had the advantage of a liberal education. She should be able to determine, since she is not hampered in any way by any other

person's wishes, what it would be best for her to do."

Old Margaret watched him closely and understood exactly what he meant, although some of his words had been, as she herself would have expressed it, a little "dark" to her; she knew he meant that so far as he was concerned there would be no interference in the matter in which she had just been trying to interest him. But although she knew him to be "set," still she was not willing to retire, although for the time completely vanquished, without making one more effort for the ultimate well-being of her wee wan.

"I want to ask wan question, sir, before I lave—an' niver afther this wan toime will I be throublin' ye." She came a little nearer, her arms akimbo on her ample hips. "Do you belave that the darlin's mither wud be feelin' only jist as careless as be you, if she could be here wid us now?"

No one, not even Margaret herself had ever before dared to speak to Mr. Wane in just this way regarding his young wife. It had been always understood by all of those who had conversed with him concerning personal matters that there must always be maintained with reference to this one sad and sacred subject the most respectful and inviolate silence. So now she did not hesitate, although she was beyond all doubt not only badly frightened but disappointed, for she had hoped that good ground would be gained for her to set her feet upon, and so advance toward the end she longed to reach. She waited for an answer to her question breathlessly; once or twice she opened her pitifully trembling and utterly helpless old mouth with the intention to speak to Mr. Wane again, but the austerity of his manner, com-

bined with the severe accusation that rested in his eyes, forbade it, and at length, overawed, humiliated and crestfallen, she turned and was about to leave the room when she was arrested by the sound of a light, quick footstep approaching the door:

“Margaret, dear!” called Bettina’s fresh young voice, “Margaret, dear, where are you?”

“Here’s yer poor auld Margaret,” answered the old nurse, tottering toward the door that the girl held open for her. “Here she is, an’ bad cess to anything,” shaking her fluttering old fist at the air, “that thrives to kape her from ye!”

XII

Kurk Kaleen was both gratified and encouraged by the knowledge that he would meet with no opposition. Upheld by this he used every means through which he might secure the consent of the girl whom he wished to marry. Realizing that old Margaret, who could not conceal her real feelings even had she desired to do so, was strenuously and even in her weak way fiercely opposed to him, the young man so far as possible eliminated her from the problem he was trying to solve. This attitude of his mind was even more pronounced with regard to the girl's dumb companion. In pursuance of some plans that he had formulated during the night, he early one morning met Bettina and old Margaret as they were about to start upon their customary walk.

"I think," he said hurriedly, respectfully saluting the strangely matched but congenial pair, "that as I came out I heard someone calling with considerable insistence for Margaret O'Keefe," knowing that the lumbering old woman would be almost certain to carefully investigate the imaginary summons, he confidently added, "You and I might go on for a little way, Bettina, and if necessary wait," for the old woman had innocently swallowed the bait that he had thrown out to her and was hurrying toward the house.

Having thus done away with one of his opponents, the young diplomat gracefully and successfully avoided trouble with the remaining one, for Bonny was joyfully conducting the expedition, by speaking in a low, placating tone of voice, and by

refraining from actual contact with the girl's person. Having cleared the decks for action he drew near but not too near, as the girl's canine guard had reported for duty, to the dainty and desirable little craft that he intended to capture.

"Bettina," he began, his low tones lingering over the name, "when I think of what may be in store for us, together, it hardly seems to me that I can wait much longer for you to say, dear little girl, that you will be my wife."

The girl looked up at him, and although rosy blushes chased each other over her fair face, she did not say the words that, as he had very plainly indicated, he wished to hear. Instead, she brought the conversation back and steered her little craft beyond the danger zone, into which it was about to drift.

"I've always loved the great outdoors," she said. "When the air is balmy it is delightful, but when there is a storm I love to brace myself against the wind and feel the rain—or snow—upon my face. Being outside, beneath the open sky," looking up and around happily, "seems to give me, somehow, both courage and contentment."

But this, although it was to him, like everything she said or did, most interesting, was not what he had meant to talk about that morning according to his plans of the night before. And, so, he changed the subject altogether and asked her when she thought her tutor would return.

"I do not know," she answered, glancing shyly up as if to find the reason for his question, "but I suppose, when he is sufficiently recuperated, he will again take up the arduous work laid down because it had grown burdensome." She smiled a little whimsically and added, "My education has

been strenuous in many ways for both my tutor and myself. Having but one pupil, he has been obliged to adjust his instructions to that one mind, instead of having had a variety of mentalities to practise upon. While I, the only one to be taught, have had to endure the full, glaring force of the light of his knowledge,—which, according to his own statement, is almost if not entirely unlimited.”

“Barney McCoy,” the young man declared heartily, “has been eminently successful in the performance of his work. I do not blame him for his egotism. Of course, though, he must not be given too much credit, for undoubtedly many of your mental attainments have been acquired in spite of his instructions.”

“It is true,” assented the girl, “that I have not strictly followed in every instance the exact lines of thought into which he has directed me. Alone in my father’s library, I have often been proud and thankful for those great mentalities which, through the written words that they have left behind, appealed directly to me. Through their guidance I have found food that has sustained and nourished a part of my nature which without it would have been crippled, if indeed it had not perished utterly.”

He looked at her speculatively, for in every way that was possible for him he was making a study of her. He was wondering what authors had had the most influence in directing the trend of her thoughts, and remembering her predilection for the works of George Eliot, he said:

“I suppose you know that the author of ‘The Mill On The Floss’ subjected herself to rather harsh criticism by the liberality of some of her statements, in which she declared herself to be

against some of the established customs of the time in which she lived, and that consequently her genius was to some extent unappreciated or at least unacknowledged, especially among those whose doctrines she opposed?"

"So I have been led to understand," replied George Eliot's ardent admirer, "and I have been deeply grieved when I have reflected that such a woman as she was obliged in any degree to be hampered, held back or hurt by lack of understanding, and fanatical bigotry."

At this point in the dialogue there was interruption of a nature not to be denied. Strutting along the public highway, "Armed with a little, brief authority," to quote one of William Shakespeare's cryptic sentences, the two young people suddenly became aware of the approach of a familiar squatty figure.

"My dear young lady," announced her tutor as soon as he was within hailing distance, "we must get back to regular, consecutive routine!"

XIII

When old Margaret O'Keefe discovered that Barney McCoy had returned she did not conceal her annoyance, but on the other hand she did not at once enter into conflict with him. In fact, for reasons of her own and for the first time during her acquaintance with him, she was in need of his assistance; being, as she put it, "at her wit's end." She was willing to call for help even from her worst enemy.

In this desperate decision she went one day, when she had reason to believe that the tutor would be alone, to the door of the library, and in a manner that was characteristic, knocked loudly and insistently. After what seemed to her to be some little time, she realized that someone was slowly and stiffly approaching the door from the other side. In spite of her strong resolve concerning the mission upon which she was bent, her fists began to double up and her arms to set themselves akimbo, for she felt certain that the person then within the room was none other than "that sthrut-tin' spalpeen." As the person in the library came nearer and nearer the door, old Margaret felt as if she were about to suffocate but still she stood her ground. At length a hand was on the knob and very soon the two, from their very natures caustic and embittered foes, were face to face, one with the other. The man stepped back in undisguised astonishment and his right hand closed around the fiery, pointed tuft of whiskers that adorned the middle of his chin. He looked straight at his uninvited guest and she in turn

looked back at him. He was so much surprised that he was for the time being speechless, and old Margaret, now that she had gained the audience she sought, was from the very force of the emotions that had brought her there temporarily as silent. They eyed each other for a few seconds, and then the tutor, feeling it somehow incumbent on him as the host, broke the ice or set the fire going, as the case might be.

"To what am I indebted," he began, with the intent to be quite formal—but then the unusually pitiful and stricken look upon the ignorant old woman's features appealed to his superior intelligence. Instead of going on in that strain he switched to one far milder and more human. "To be brief and come directly to the point, what can I do for you?"

At the same time he stepped aside and back, and so invited her to enter. This she did gingerly, and for her very quietly. As soon as she found her bearings she enlightened him as to the visit.

"It may seem quare to you that I, a lone widdy woman as ye are knowin' me to be, should come here by mesilf to talk wid ye. But it has lately been borne in on me that maybe you and I, bechune us, might be afther doin' a little bit of good together, instid of always fightin' back and forth. That is," she went on, seeing the look of grandiloquent disdain beginning to assert itself upon the man's otherwise placid, self-satisfied countenance, "if you should fer once in all yer life be willin' to fergit yersilf, sufficient, so as that ye could be afther doin' somethin' for anither one *besides* yersilf; an' this wan," ignoring the beligerent expression that was growing on the tutor's face, "that I'll be afther askin' ye to do for, or to tell me how ye think that I could do me-

silf," for in her trouble she had grown so humble that she'd even stoop, as she considered it, to ask advice of him, "is only jist the wan that ye yersilf must care for if it do be possible for ye to care for annythin' at all at all, excipt yersilf. The wan that I'll be afther askin' ye to help me do for," utter helplessness had superseded, every other expression on her poor old face, "is only jist the swate, an' clane, an' good, an' innercint young gurrhl that ye've been afther tachin' ever since she was a wee wan."

She stopped then, not so much because she had finished what she had to say as because what she had already said had been too much for her to bear without the shedding of some tears. The corners of her apron were in evidence and as she wiped first one dim eye and then the other, the heart of him who watched her softened, and for the first time during their long and exceedingly stormy acquaintance, the finer feeling that his excessive self-admiration seemed sometimes almost entirely to obliterate took such complete possession of him that he sincerely pitied and desired to bolster up this weaker mortal. With this benevolent and for him unusual intention he said,

"I did not know that the young lady was in need of anyone's assistance. She seems to me in every way quite capable and eminently able to attend independently and successfully to her own affairs. Of course, if I could help in any way," he added, for the stricken look was deepening on the old woman's face, "I should be glad, and for that matter proud, to do so. For a pedagogue, no matter what position he may hold in life, even if he should be looked upon or even treated as a *menial*, has always the deepest interest in and the most

profound desire for the mental and moral advancement of his pupil. And, so my good woman," relaxing a little the stiffness of his attitude and relinquishing the oratorical tone, "let me know, if you can do so, in what way I can serve the dear young lady upon whose education I have spent a great deal of my valuable time."

Old Margaret, having secured once more the conversational floor, immediately took advantage of the opportunity offered.

"It do be seemin' that if we," acknowledging the existence of the partnership that they had tacitly entered into, "don't be afther doin' some-thin' phutty quick—" for while he had been talking it had been borne on her that she might find a selfish motive for him to act on, after all—"ye won't be afther havin' anny pupeel to be tachin' yer highfalutin notions *til!* For whin Miss laves this house, an' if we don't be afther sthoppin' her she'll do that same, she won't be very apt to take you wid her, no matter how much of a piddler's gob ye be!"

XIV

While Barney McCoy was studious and philosophical, he was at the same time, astute and practical. Being always self-centred, these mental characteristics were particularly active where anything concerning himself was to be considered. He looked down on even while he pitied Bettina's old nurse, and yet her statement with regard to the change that might soon take place in his own affairs found a lodgment in his inner consciousness. And relieved of her irritating presence, he thought the matter over, and made a definite decision, this mental resolve was succeeded by precision and dispatch. One day not long after the tutor had had his eyes opened, he skillfully, and at the expense of some little exertion, managed to secure for himself an hour or more of Kurk Kaleen's time. The manner in which the young man attempted to evade strengthened the older one in his determination to have a private interview. Having at length overcome and successfully set aside the opposition that he met, the pedagogue took up his favorite position in the centre of the library, for with diplomatic tact and strategy he had staged the little drama amid surroundings that were familiar to him, with the weapons in the use of which he was adept near at hand.

"My dear young friend, from certain indications that have come under my observation, I am inclined to believe that you are now or soon will be a suitor for the hand of the young lady to whose education I have been devoting a great deal of my

valuable time during the past several years." Having made the foregoing statement he paused with the intention of observing what effect his words had had, and feeling satisfied after a cursory examination of his companion's countenance, continued with even more confidence. "I wonder if you—having come here from the outside world, where of necessity different standards than those that are militant here govern the general conduct—can understand the position that I, a man of education and refinement have been obliged to occupy here among those whose mental attainments have been, almost directly, in contrast to my own! I suppose," switching, at this juncture from his customary line of argument, "that if you succeed in winning the heart and hand of the young lady whose education I have been conducting," the expression of firm determination sweeping over Kurk Kaleen's handsome features had its influence upon the words that followed, in fact it was, almost directly the cause of them, "she will undoubtedly need as your wife, occupying a position in society to which she will be entirely unaccustomed, the advice and intellectual guidance of someone who is not only familiar with the ways of the world, but also well-versed in the courtesies and amenities of polite society." His cheeks were puffing out and his color was greatly heightened. "And I wish to ask you, as man to man where you could find—anywhere upon the earth—a person who is so eminently well-fitted both in theory and practice to act in the capacity of private and social secretary in the interests, and for the benefit, of the lady who will be," for he had decided to throw to the four winds any scruples he once had, having lost sight of every-

thing except his own possible advantage, "your wife—as the one who now stands before you?"

After his oratorical and dramatic question the little man continued to stand at attention in the exact center of the room, like an animated interrogation point. At length the one he had addressed, seeing no way by which he could diplomatically avoid answering, and feeling that in an affair of the importance of the one under consideration even the assistance of the self-blinded tutor was not to be despised, cautiously began:

"My wife herself would of course decide all such matters as the one to which you refer so that I could not definitely at this time engage your services no matter how much I might feel disposed to do so. However, I might say," he went on, realizing more and more that it would be a good idea to have Barney McCoy on his side, "that so far as I am concerned I see no objection to the arrangement that you propose; in fact, the more I think of it it seems to me to be very likely that *Bettina*," pronouncing the name softly and slowly, "would probably enjoy having someone with whom she had been more or less familiar almost all her life, as a part of her new home."

He had rambled on with the general idea of at least not offending the one whom he was addressing, and had no idea of the actual effect that his own apparent acceptance of the offer had had upon the author of it. The latter's chest had been protruding more and more, until at the conclusion of the young man's remarks it had swollen to such proportion that the owner seemed either about to burst or to tip over backwards. Stepping briskly forward as Kurk Kaleen ceased speaking, he grasped the astonished young man's reluctant

hand and holding it warmly, almost affectionately, in his own, declared:

“This is an unexpected, although at the same time an often longed-for pleasure! My dear young friend, you see before you a man who has within the last few moments reached the highest pinnacle of his earthly ambition! It has always been my hope even when assailed by the canker of adversity, even when I have been obliged to occupy, although only temporarily, an almost menial position—that some time I would meet and exchange confidences with a human being who would at least in some slight degree approach the intellectual plane that has had the honor to support my separate and independent individuality. My dear young friend,” he ended, still clinging to the hand that the young man was constantly but carefully attempting to withdraw, “do not despair! Although the time may seem to you today to be far distant, although your heart may almost fail you, do not allow the flame of hope to die within your breast. For it may be—when, of course I cannot say—that through intimate, daily association and mutual, intelligent endeavor, I may be able—although doubtless at the expense of almost superhuman energy—to raise you, perchance, to a new level.”

XV

Bettina felt free when occasion required her to consult with her father concerning matters that would from their nature be submitted to his judgment, but she very seldom talked with him about her own personal affairs. However, it seemed to her that anything that would make as radical a change in the household as her departure from it should at least be mentioned to its natural and nominal, as well as actual, head; and the girl was seriously considering what was being almost constantly forced upon her attention. Her old nurse, in case she herself had been disturbed by one of her "distressin' drames," did not hesitate to appear beside her wee wan's bed at any unknown hour of the night, and almost invariably the thing that had crept in between her and restful sleep had something to do with the "handsome an' al-lurin'" young man whose visit to his father's friend was being prolonged indefinitely. While Bettina's lover himself did not fail to take advantage of every opportunity to further his own cause so that the young woman, even had she desired to do so, was unable to remove from her mental horizon the possibility of her marriage. She had not yet mentioned it to her father, although Kurk Kaleen had in his own way informed her that he had given his consent to their union. Hence one morning with a strange feeling of aloofness from her former self and the reasons that had hitherto prompted the infrequent demands upon her father's time, she went to his study, and finding him alone and apparently unengaged, seated herself

in the chair that he courteously indicated and without prelude or excuse began:

"I understand, Father," her sweet voice carressed the title, "that you have already been informed of a possible change that may soon occur, and that you have given it your approval. My going away would, to some extent, affect your daily life."

He looked up then, and as their glances met he saw within her eyes a repetition of his own calm, exclusive mental attitude toward all that was around him.

"Of course," she went on reasonably, "you would be relieved of much that must be now, and perhaps has often, been more or less a burden to you. With me away," the smile that rested on her features was a little forced, "you would not need a tutor or a nurse, and I have been wondering whether, if I should decide to go, I could take Margaret with me; or if you would desire to keep her here so that she might continue the little household duties that she has for years considered to be her own."

She stopped and her father, leaning forward, his forehead on his hand, looked down as if absorbed in earnest thought. At length, as if he had come to some definite conclusion, he raised his head and regarded his daughter, who in turn was patiently and expectantly waiting.

"Bettina, I have given my sanction to the offer of marriage that Kurk Kaleen has made because so far as I can see he is in every way fitted to be your husband. You yourself, without let or hindrance, and without undue influence one way or the other, must decide as to whether at this time you desire to marry. And if so whether or not you would wish to marry him. There is no one

else who is wise enough or who, so far as that goes, possesses the right, to settle such a question as this. The matrimonial experience of one person, or for that matter of any number of persons, is no criterion, for each person has his individual characteristics and the union of any two sets of personal peculiarities may or may not be fortunate. Prejudices and superstitious notions," he continued, for old Margaret's whirlwind opposition to the proposed marriage had affected him somewhat, although in her presence he had not admitted the fact, "should be entirely set aside when considering a question as serious as the one we are discussing. But, as I have already mentioned, your action or refusal to act is something for you, and you alone, to decide upon. As to taking your old nurse with you in case you conclude to enter a home of your own, she would without doubt wish to accompany you wherever you would go, and as you have almost invariably humored her slightest whim, it is very likely that old Margaret O'Keefe would follow in your footsteps. So, my daughter, I leave this matter entirely in your hands, for it concerns you as deeply and intimately as it can concern no one else."

Realizing that he would not in any way assist her in making her momentous decision, and feeling she thoroughly understood the position he had taken, the girl arose and going near him, stood beside his chair and looked calmly and deliberately at him. This was an attitude that she had many times assumed when, as a little child, she had been sent by her old nurse to say good-night. So she stood now, a woman, it is true, and yet as much a little child in very many ways as she had ever been. Her isolated life, her utter lack of experience as girls of her age have almost always

had, her freedom from the influences of associations with anyone except her father—all these and many other unusual, contribubting conditions combined to make her morally a child-like woman, one whose heart was free from guile, hypocrisy or any foul uncleanness. Her tastes led her where fair flowers, in nature and in literature, were blooming, where noble thoughts were spread in language that she understood, upon the pages of the book. And he who sat there in that chair observed that this was so. Yet he did not say the things he might have regarding the great change that she was contemplating; he did not ask her if she loved the man to whom he had given his own consent provided she gave hers; he did not try to take her mother's place, to frankly talk with her. She did not understand what marriage meant and he could not have told her what it meant if he had tried. And so Bettina Wane stood there beside her father's chair, a little child and yet a woman, and said to him:

"I want to ask you one thing, Father, before I go—for it may be that I shall go." Two pairs of steady eyes were gazing, one into the other. "Is it because my dear young mother died in bringing me into the world that you have never cared for me?"

He threw his folded arms upon the table, bowed his head upon them, and sadly, in a muffled voice she heard him say:

"Bettina, my poor child—I do not know!"

XVI

There is in human life a more or less symmetrical sequence of events. This sequence seems to be inevitable, and is almost always clothed in mystery. What sometimes seems a separate, individual circumstance is often really the result of what has gone before. It is not always possible to trace preliminary proceedings that lead up to and cause what seem to be mere happenings, for human beings are but finite, with intellectual limitations that render them incapable of following the infinitesimal ramifications which—as impervious to the meddlesome manipulations of mortals as are the gossamer threads of sunbeams—fit into each other and with eventual equalization govern earthly affairs.

Nature's laws partake sufficiently of the omnipotence of Him, Who, in the beginning, put them in motion, so that they cannot with impunity be set aside by those who come beneath their ruling. The breaking of any one of nature's laws, particularly if one individual infringes even slightly upon the rights and privileges of another, brings about its own consequential punishment, although the latter may be long delayed.

Kurk Kaleen decided that he wanted and must have, regardless of whatever might attempt to interfere, complete possession of the fair young girl in accordance with the laws of man and with the sanction of the church. He took into account his own desires first and foremost for his own desires were powerful and he had given them almost invariably free rein, so that they had

grown stronger as he had grown older, until they really ruled his life. These mainsprings that moved him to action were not always ignoble, or base; had they been so, the innocent and unsophisticated charms of face and form and mind of the daughter of his father's old friend would not have appealed to him just as they did. But he would not have longed to hold her in his arms and kiss her virgin lips, as he had never longed for anything before; he would not have been willing to sacrifice his own ambitions in order to attain to the position that he coveted; he would not have looked forward with joy and gladness to the time when he could take the one who once had been Bettina Wane into his former home, among his old-time friends, and introduce her as his chosen earthly companion. He had always been, since he had reached the age of manhood, both "handsome an' allurin'," and had been sought after both by managing mothers and by the ones they managed. Although his heart had been more than once deeply touched, it had not gone entirely beyond his own control until he had visited the large and well-selected library of Walter Wane.

The fact that Bettina kept him at a distance, even when she was alone, only made him more persistent and more determined. One day, after having arranged matters to his own satisfaction with reference to the many hindrances that had been often in his way, he was seated comfortably and very cosily upon the couch, among the many cushions where he had first seen the girl. He had expected that she would soon come into the room. She was surprised to find him there, for she was not acquainted with the plans that he had made, and startled, stepped back quickly as

if about to go away, her blue eyes wide and wondering. He rose at once and intercepted her, placing himself between her and the door. She looked around as if to find some way by which she might escape.

Observing closely the expression of her face, the young man said, "Dear little girl, do not be afraid! You are safer here—alone with me—than in any other position you might occupy, because you are with one who would defend you with his life. You are with one who loves you more than he loves memories of the past, all that he is possessed of now, all his hopes and his ambitions for the future—more than the whole wide world without you—more, far more, than his own life, himself." He came a little nearer and placed the fingers of one hand gently, reverently, upon her shoulder, and looked down into her face. For a long moment they stood thus, these two young beings with almost all of human life before them, and they knew that they were standing at a door which, once passed through, would close and shut from them forever what they were then. The girl shrank back, as if she did not wish to pass beyond but the man moved yet a little nearer as he whispered, "Do not be afraid, Bettina. I love you, and I know that you love me!"

Bettina Wane was every whit a woman, strong, affectionate, warm-blooded, one in whom the latent forces of her nature had rested pure, untarnished, unaroused. She herself had no conception of the passionate, electrical attraction that lay dormant, without form or feeling, in her nerves, and in her blood, beneath her soft, smooth skin, within the deep, unfathomed pools of blue that were her eyes, in the vibrant, trembling tones of her young voice—and all, all waited only for

answering forces of equal intensity to become at once things of life, masterful and mystifying, sweeping every other sentiment, principle or feeling on and ever on before its own resistless might. This that was within her had never been depleted or in any way misused, and when it was for the first time in all her strong unsullied life called forth, it became at once the paramount and controlling power of her whole being. She did not know the meaning of this force, nor where the tide would carry her, but she did know that when Kurk Kaleen whispered to her not to be afraid she had never felt as safe, as buoyant and as free as she did then.

His arms went round her and one of his strong, supple hands was placed beneath her chin, so that her face was raised to meet his own, pale intense, compelling, bending above it. Her sweet, soft lips that never yet had touched the lips of any man were quivering beneath his virile mouth. Her lover half lifted and half led the girl until she was reclining on the couch, among the many cushions that were waiting to receive her. Kurk Kaleen knelt down upon the floor before her, and looking up into her face exclaimed:

“You must know now, Bettina, that we two were intended for each other!”

He bowed his head until it rested on her lap, and when he felt her fingers on his hair he knew that she had answered him, and that her answer had been yes.

XVII

Old Margaret and Bettina started out one morning rather earlier than usual, for ever since the girl had indeed been a wee wan her old nurse had taken her out into the morning air, believing that through this and other means that she employed her charge would grow to be a strong and healthy woman. As they walked along the well-known path the younger woman looked searchingly at the one who trudged beside her. And after a few moments spent in earnest reflection, remarked as if casually:

"It may be, Margaret, dear, that you and I will not be traveling over this familiar road much longer."

The old woman cringed as if she had received a blow that, while not unexpected, was hard to bear. But straightening up and squaring her unwieldy shoulders as if a heavy burden had been laid upon them, she presently replied:

"Wheriver it is that ye'll be afther goin', darlin', ye'll foind auld Margaret along wid ye. All yer life she's followed afther whin yer little, toddlin' feet went totterin' an' slow, an' whin ye learned to walk an' run. An' now, me own, I've long been manin' to tell ye something I have niver mintioned yit to annyone. Whin I was young my skin was only jist as fair as yours be now. My cheeks were always rosy an' I was not so heavy. I was only jist as light and quick to move as ye are yersilf. It may seem quare to you, but whin I was as I've been afther tellin' ye I had a lover as handsome an' allurin' as this young man who's

stayin' here wid us. I liked his looks an' liked his ways, an' liked the things he said til me about mesilf. An' so wan day that I'll be always well remimberin', I went wid him an' stood there by the side of him as innercint an' unbeknownst as iver anny ninny cud; an' listened tremblin' an' afraid, an' yit as happy as a queen, til the praste. An' niver did I hear a single word he said, but whin he had stopped talkin'—for a praste is very free wid words an' this wan used that day some that have iver since been dark to me—Tim O'Keefe, bad cess til him, grabbed hold of me wid hands as soft and gintle as a cat's paws is whin she is only jist about to swallow down a innercint an' unsuspected mouse, an' says til me, says Tim O'Keefe, 'My dear, swate gurrhl! My darlin' wife! An' that was quite the wan last toime that Tim O'Keefe towld me I was swate or yit his darlin'."

"Margaret, dear," said Bettina, pityingly, "you've often told me that you are a widow; your husband hust have died while you were still quite young."

"He may be livin' yit, an' doin' damage yit, for all that I'll be afther knowin'! Darlin'," she went on tenderly, looking with steadfast affection at the girl, "darlin', ye are as innercint as I whin I married Tim O'Keefe. Ye've niver had no trainin' whin it comes to men, howiver much that spalpeen may have taught ye about books. Tim O'Keefe," reverting to her own experience, "afther tellin' me that I was swate wint right on tellin' gurrhls that they was swate, the same as he'd been doin' before ever he towld me that I was his darlin' wife. An' wan day, afther there'd been black trouble brewin' for some time bechune us, he wint away. An niver do I hope to see his

handsome an' allurin' face again in this world, or in anny ither!"

Bettina, who had never even heard of such "black trouble," hardly knew just what to say, and so they both were silent. Bonny came and walked between them, as silent as they. It was as if the three were thinking over all that had been said and trying to decide just what to do. The dog looked up first at one face and then the other. They had been walking three abreast for some time, when suddenly the hair upon the back of Bonny's neck began to stiffen, and she uttered a low, protesting growl, at the same time changing her position so that Bettina was between old Margaret and herself. Then and only then the two women heard a quick, light step approaching. The girl's face grew as rosy as the dawn, and although old Margaret did not growl it could be seen that she too would have been most willing to have done so. As Kurk Kaleen came up he smilingly advanced until he was beside Bettina, or as nearly as he could be with Bonny there between them. It could be seen that he was much annoyed by the dog, for he looked at her and scowled. Then he looked away and bit his lower lip. At length old Margaret, mindful of this little by-play and thoroughly enjoying it, remarked:

"It do be seemin' that we are not used to havin' gintlemen aroun', me darlin'. Bonny niver pays attintion to yer piddler's gob," both of the young people looked at her in amazement, but she, feeling that she had referred to Barney McCoy with distant dignity because she used her interpretation of a title of which he was evidently very proud, went blithely on, "but thin she knows as well as I do that he is not a gintleman."

The young man had every reason to believe that

the girl's feeling for him was far more than friendly, and he ventured to voice a mild remonstrance.

"Do you suppose, Bettina, that this dog will become accustomed to me, or will you have to choose between us?" Bonny knew that he'd referred to her, and from his manner also knew that the reference was not friendly. Also he had ingratiatingly come a little nearer to her mistress, and the dog displayed two unbroken rows of strong white teeth, and at the same time looked fiercely at him.

"I don't see how, Bettina, if you care for me as I believe you do, you can tolerate her attitude toward me!"

The girl looked down at Bonny, keeping pace with her as she had done at some time during almost every day for many years, and the dog looked up, returning her affectionate regard with interest as she waved her plume-like tail.

The girl was evidently perturbed, and finally she said: "I do not understand why she feels toward you as she surely seems to. I hope that we," blushing shyly, "will be able to teach her that you are her friend as well as mine. She has been with me ever since she came into this world—and she has never before shown a decided antipathy to any human being. She loves me dearly and," courageously, "I love her."

He came a little nearer to Bettina in spite of Bonny's protest and stretching out one hand was about to lay it gently on her arm when the collie leaped up lithely and closed her teeth upon his fingers. Instantly his anger flamed and in a cold, metallic voice he said: "I see that you will have to choose, Bettina. I do not think this brute and I will ever be good friends."

XVIII

"It do be seemin', sir," said old Margaret one day when she had cornered Kurk Kaleen, "that no matter how ye thry ye are goin' to have a hard job on yer hands if ye iver do succeed in makin' up wid Bonny. A dog is a quare creature, sir. I knew wan once that took a notion ferninst a man who wanted to become a mimber of the family that the dog was in. The man was careless-like and didn't thry to make up wid the dog, an' wan day," carefully watching her victim, "the two of thim come together, the baith of thim at the same toime, to where the one they baith loved was standin'. The man stretched out only wan hand," she could see that her listener was becoming more and more interested in spite of himself, "an' the dog grabbed his fingers in its mouth. An' from that day the dog an' man hated each ither worse than poison-ivy, an' niver wud make up wid each ither. An' the reason of it, sir, was only jist that the dog had had a taste of blood," looking sharply at a scratch on the back of the young man's hand, "and there was hatred bechune the owner of the blood an' the dog that had got a taste of it."

"Do you think," the young man asked, for he had really had a great deal of anxiety about this matter, "that your young mistress will insist upon taking this vicious brute," with scornful emphasis, "into her new home?"

"Ye do be askin' the only wan in all this house who cud be tellin' what ye want to know, sir." Her questioner had pleased her for the first time

during their acquaintance by deferring to her judgment. "Yis! I niver did belave, sir, in usin' more words than is essintial. I knew wan woman who wud talk and talk and talk, and niver be afther tellin' annything at all, at all. She was an auld woman, sir, as auld as I mesilf—an' as I have said to me darlin' many times, if age don't bring ye sinse, what will?"

"What makes you think that she will want to take the dog with her? When a woman goes from her father's house she generally leaves behind all her childish playthings."

"Ye don't be afther knowin' me darlin' yit, at all, at all. Whin she says she loves annything she manes it. She told yersilf, sir, whin I was standin' by, that she loves Bonny. An' the dog loves her, sir, as annyone can see. My girlie's heart is very tinder, sir; why, whin she was not more than a wee wan, I wud sometimes be missin' her an' whin I'd foind her—for I niver rested widout doin' only jist that same—she'd be thryin' to make some poor thing happier than she thought that it could be widout her. She niver did care much for playthings like ither wee wans do," going to the latter part of the remark that she had given him time to make, "for maist of thim as soon as they can grab will shake a rattle or pound on annything that they can reach, to make a noise. For they seem to think, sir, the maist of wee wans do, that they were sent into this world only jist for divilment and throuble, an' they turn their main attintion to the makin' of the same. Young people sildom realize whin they do be thinkin' of startin' up a family, how many different kinds of throuble bechune the wee wans an' theirsilves they do be layin' up. There was a young man once who had iverything that annyone cud wish,

except one thing. He wint wan day an' give iverything he had for the wan thing that he wanted, an' took it home wid him. An' whin he started to take it through his door he saw that there was nothing there at all at all, for iverything he had he'd give for his wan thing. So the young man wint an' asked the praste to tell him what to do. The praste attempted to console him, as prastes maist always do, by findin' all the fault wid him that he could find; he told him iverything he'd done was wrong an' that it was too late to make it right, an' thin he told him only jist to go somewhere an' cross himsilf, an' say his prayers an' make the best of it. An' so," she ended, looking straight at Kurk Kaleen, who flinched and looked away, "whin a young man thinks that he must have a certain thing to make him happy, sometimes the thing he thinks he wants is only jist the very thing that will, whin it belongs til him, take iverything he had before—away from him an' fill his life wid misery!"

But the young man to whom she spoke was differently minded, as could be seen by the expression on his face, and when old Margaret's almost ceaseless flow of utterly inadequate and self-repeating language stopped, he hastened to fill in the pause:

"I only wanted you to tell me what you thought about the dog. I did not ask for your opinion of our marriage which," he ended, regarding her with sternness not unmixed with animosity, "will very soon take place."

Defeat, and resignation to what she could not change were plainly written on the poor old woman's flabby features. They visibly sagged down, while her poor old heart was evidently shriveled by the white-hot javelin that her tor-

mentor gladly thrust into it; and he twisted it around within the wound that he had made by adding cruelly: "My wife will not be apt to take into the home that I will make for her anything that she has here, as I am well prepared to furnish her with all that she will need."

But he had gone too far with the old nurse; her motherly instincts were up in arms at once. The fear and weakness that had quite concealed her courage left her face and falling, as if it had been but a mask, revealed the latent fierceness that the wild things of the forest feel when danger is threatening their young. Rising to her feet, she advanced heavily, determinedly upon him, her arms akimbo, her dim blue eyes ablaze:

"There do be wan thing that me darlin' will take wid her whereiver she may go, no matter who or what may be wid her, as long as this old heart that ye have thried to break kapes batin'! There do be wan thing that will always stand bechune her an' annything that thries to do her harm—even wid her own consent! Me poor wee wan is so innercint, so clane, an' swate an' unsuspected that she might be afther walkin' right straight intil a trap! But I," now she sobbed, "will go along wid her no matter what she walks intil! An' thin," she cried, "bad cess til him, whoiver he may be—if he do be prepared to furnish her wid coachmen an' wid footmen, an' wid kerridges an' coats of arms—if he should iver make me poor girl suffer!"

XIX

One day after Walter Wane and his visitor had been engaged in earnest conversation for some time concerning various matters, the latter suddenly and yet with evident premeditation said:

"Sir, I wish to apprise you formally of the fact that your daughter has given her consent to our marriage."

The older man received the announcement quietly, and yet it could be seen that he was deeply stirred. Leaning forward, he stretched out his right hand, upon the upward-turning palm of which his visitor immediately placed his own. The two men looked silently into each other's eyes for a long moment; then Mr. Wane allowed his eyelids to droop and with bowed head, in a voice that trembled with emotion, said:

"She has, for twenty years, been the chief consideration of my whole existence. With her eliminated from it, the problem of my life remains indeed unsolved. My being here upon the earth has always been to me a mystery; my daughter's care and education were duties plainly placed upon me and insofar as I have been able, I have performed them. With her marriage these duties come automatically to an end, although of course I should always be willing to consult with her concerning the conduct of her life. But the daily routine that has gone on here for years, for her sake, will cease when she leaves my home to enter yours. This naturally will affect me greatly, so much so," he ended, slumping down in his chair, so that he suddenly appeared prematurely old and

feeble, "that I cannot now determine how I shall be able to proceed at all."

Kurk Kaleen regarded his companion with wonder, for he had not been prepared to witness such a display of emotion on the part of the reserved and almost taciturn man. At last, as if wishing to brighten the prospect ahead of the older man, he declared:

"We shall have need of your companionship and advice without doubt very often, for we are both young and in many ways entirely inexperienced."

The older man smiled sadly, as if he fully understood the attitude the other had assumed, and the reason.

"Since my daughter's birth my own experience has not extended very far beyond the walls of my home. Prior to that event, however, I mingled rather widely with my fellowmen, having as an incentive the carrying on of a study in which at the time I was much interested, a study that even now occasionally I long to complete. In order to gratify this studious desire a great deal of traveling was necessary, both in my own country and beyond. In this way my acquaintance with human nature became more extensive than it would otherwise have been and I was able, almost at a glance, to divide men into certain classes with such accuracy that I was very seldom deceived in them upon further acquaintance. However, as you are well aware, it is the exception that proves the rule, and so it was in my own case. After years devoted to the study to which I have referred, I was enabled to perceive, far in advance of me, vast, apparently unlimited vistas of thought through which, as it seemed to me, I might wander."

The young man regarded his host with the respect to which, as he had long understood, he was

entitled. It had been explained to him that the father of the woman he was about to marry had sacrificed, smothered, or at any rate held in check, a most absorbing and decidedly worthy ambition—in the pursuit of which there was very little competition on account of the strenuous and unusual preparation, as well as subsequent exertion, necessary—in order to overlook the development of the life for which the woman he loved had given hers. As he looked at his companion, the clear, strong light that is the light of illuminating understanding broke in upon him and glorified the vision of his inner consciousness, so that he realized as he had never done before what that long-suppressed and closely shut-in ambition had meant to the lonely, self-disciplining student. With the wider knowledge that had just been bestowed upon him came also a deeper sympathy that went below his own desires, and stirred within his nature feelings of which he had never before been conscious. Moved by these masterful and hitherto unknown forces, he laid one hand over the hand of his host as it rested on the arm of his chair, and without any thought of possible results for himself, in a low and earnest tone of voice said:

“It may be that these years of seemingly enforced quiet and almost utter solitude were as necessary to the perfection and ultimate completion of the work upon which your youthful energy was expended as were the years of activity that preceded them.”

Mr. Wane leaned forward as the other man, removing his hand from his, sat once more erect, and placing the tips of his fingers upon his visitor's knee, took up the thread of conversation where the latter had dropped it:

“It is true that psychical advancement is so

mystifying that it is quite beyond the comprehension of the ordinary, indifferently trained intellect. It may be, as you have hinted, I had gained all that, for the time being, I was fitted to receive from almost constant contact with my fellow-men—that I needed time for deep reflection upon what had already come under my observation; also, that it had become necessary for me to fix my attention upon my own inner consciousness—simply make a study of myself. But why a mentality in every way as capable and eager as my own had to be obliterated so far as earthly affairs are concerned has been to me a horrifying and unanswerable question.”

Kurk Kaleen became aware, and even then but dimly, of the depth and vitality of an exclusive, all-absorbing material love. It was in many ways beyond his comprehension, in spite of the fact that he himself was at the time experiencing an entirely new and strange, to him, humility. He was moved to speak intimately.

“The fact that your daughter, sir, without doubt inherited many of your unexampled traits of character, as well as your noble and uplifting tendencies toward the contemplation of higher and broader fields of thought, may to some extent explain the self-effacing, reverential, even adoring devotion that she has, much to my surprise, aroused in me.”

XX

After the return of Barney McCoy, Bettina again began to study. In fact, the mere presence of the fussy, one-idea'd pedagogue inhibited the devotion of that portion of her time to any other purpose. He always mapped out for his pupil a yearly course of study, which he invariably submitted to his principal, Bettina's father, for suitable provision for an annual vacation, he systematically and strenuously insisted upon following it out, letter by letter, precept by precept. This method established a daily routine which, as he believed, laid the foundation for healthy, vigorous mental growth, not only because it regularly added new and practical, as well as idealistic knowledge to that already laid away in the mental storehouse of the person under training, but also because in this way the forces of the mind were almost continually being called into action. In spite of the knowledge he had already received, with regard to the girl's probable marriage—since his employer had not yet notified him that he no longer required his services—he went on with his work as he had done for many years, efficiently, even if also vaingloriously.

One day as Bettina quietly entered the library where her tutor had already established himself at his desk, with a long line of ponderous volumes drawn up in front of him, she observed that he was unusually nervous and absent-minded, for while he acknowledged her entrance by his customary curt, officious greeting, he did not follow it up with admonitions as to her memory on the

work of the preceding day, or even forecast the work that they were then about to do. Instead he gazed at her with an anxiety which he was evidently trying to conceal beneath an air of serenity. She came and stood beside his desk, as she had done on many previous occasions, waiting for him to take the initiative with regard to the lessons that she had prepared for his inspection. The little man was seemingly much perturbed, and very much in doubt; so much so that it finally became necessary for him to leave his chair and take up his position in the center of the room. Here, having steadied himself as usual by firmly taking hold of the fiery, pointed tuft of whiskers that grew in the middle of his chin, he oratorically and yet somewhat hesitatingly began:

"My dear young lady, you are approaching an important and a decidedly unique turning-point in your life. Thus far in our acquaintance I have been engaged solely in furthering your intellectual advancement—and in so doing I believe that I have served you faithfully and well. I know that I have employed in this more or less successful labor the full force of my not inconsiderable mental powers, not sparing myself in any way or allowing my own tastes which naturally demanded what would be entirely beyond your limited comprehension—to govern my selection of the subjects to be brought under your consideration. I flatter myself, my dear young lady, that your education is on a parity with that of any other person of your age and ability, even in some ways superior to it, for when a man as capable and erudite as I devotes his entire time and stupendous energy to any one cause, it must—even though in itself weak and inconspicuous—acquire a certain borrowed dignity and, enhanced by reflected glory

due to continued association with greatness, become at least in some small degree, similar to the one who has sacrificed himself in order to advance it. But in spite of this pleasing condition," he went on, with heightened color and increased animation, "it will be necessary for you, no matter what position you may occupy in your future life, to have always at hand someone who thoroughly understands not only your mental attainments but also your individual characteristics. This person should be one who has been familiar for a longer or shorter period of time with all of your surroundings; also, he should be one who has known with some degree of intimacy your respected father. Now, my dear young lady, although such a course would necessitate a great deal of self-sacrifice on my part, as well as the expenditure of almost superhuman energy, yet because of our long and harmonious association and because looking after your interests—with the exception of those requiring menial service—has become a matter of habit with me, in spite of the fact that a man of my culture and refinement would not naturally be expected to consent to such a position, yet I—Barney McCoy—here and now offer myself to you, my dear young lady, in the capacity of private and social secretary, providing, of course, that satisfactory terms as to salary and living expenses could be settled upon between us."

During all of this tirade Bettina had continued to stand beside the desk of her tutor, expecting momentarily that either from lack of words with which to express his thoughts, or from a dearth of thoughts to put into words, he would perforce come to the end of his exhortation. She had grown accustomed to listening to his self-praise, and egotistic boasting, and was not surprised, or

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even shocked by anything that he had said along that line. But she had certainly not been prepared through any previous experience to hear him intimate that, in some way unknown to her, he had become possessed of definite information regarding the proposed change in her future life. This condition of affairs was not pleasing to the diffident, retiring girl. She was confident that her father had not enlightened anyone with regard to her possible marriage, as his reticence was equal to if not greater than her own; that old Margaret should confide in the tutor, even had she been made aware of the facts, was entirely out of the question. This narrowed the possible sources through which the information evidently possessed by her instructor could have been gained, so that the girl began to suspect that her lover himself might have talked the matter over with Barney McCoy. This suspicion grew upon her until she finally determined to find out the truth concerning it. Acting upon this determination she said:

“You have been employed by my father as my tutor, and have acted in that capacity for years. Why do you wish to change the nature of your work; what leads you to think that I need a secretary?”

Fearing that he had made a mistake in bringing the matter to her attention in just the way he had, and wishing to set himself right with her at whatever cost, the little man, looking keenly at her, explained:

“When a man has been given discriminating judgment so that, becoming conscious of certain premises, he will accurately and logically arrive at the resulting conclusion, he does not need—as might be the case if he were possessed of less

acumen—to be told that any situation actually exists in order to be made aware of the fact. If, added to the mental condition already described, a man has had the advantage of a wide and varied social experience, he can often see at a glance what would be entirely hidden from a person of less perspicacity. I have watched, my dear young lady, many much more complicated situations than the one evidently in existence here, and so—going from cause to effect—I feel as I have already said, that you have reached a turning-point in your life. However,” he ended, suddenly assuming again the air of the pedagogue, “we will resume our regular work and permit the future to take care of itself.”

XXI

Among the many women with whom Kurk Kaleen had been upon terms of more or less intimacy prior to the visit that he made in his father's stead, on his father's old friend, was one who, possessed of undoubted personal charm, combined with it the added attractiveness of belonging to a distinguished and socially prominent family. She had every advantage that wealth, education and an extensive experience gained through traveling among the peoples of various countries could give to her. She was herself a native of another land than the one in which the young man met her, having gone to England with her father, who occupied a recognized and respected official position. Mr. Burton was welcomed everywhere, both in business and social circles, not only because of his own presence, which was commanding and unusual, or of his wealth, which equaled if it did not exceed that of any of his acquaintances, but also because he represented as consul the United States of America. His wife and only daughter shared with him his privileges and prestige and the honor of meeting the American consul and his family was one that was much sought after. Kurk Kaleen considered himself as very fortunate when a mutual friend introduced him to them, and his acquaintance with Lena Burton soon ripened into friendship. Those particularly interested in the young couple frequently remarked the probability of a matrimonial alliance; the young man's father had hoped for many reasons that his son and the consul's daughter would

be united in marriage, so that Kurk's letter announcing his prospective union with the daughter of his old friend was a distinct shock as well as a keen disappointment. So much so that he hastened to send a remonstrance so pronounced that it amounted almost to a protest. On receipt of this the young man immediately made arrangements to return to his home, fearing that his father had become cognizant of other reasons than those already stated to his son for his decided objection to the latter's marriage with Bettina Wane. Before terminating his visit, however, he made definite arrangements for the ceremony that was to unite his future life with that of the innocent girl, reflecting that he could cancel them should it become necessary to do so and desiring greatly to receive the full benefits of the victory he had so dearly won. Realizing, too, that a short separation would be apt to increase rather than diminish the strong, magnetic current then established between his own being and that of the girl whom he wished to make his wife, he went about his preparations for departure deliberately and without taking anyone into his confidence as to the real reasons for his going. On the last morning of his stay he had a conference with Mr. Wane that proved to be more momentous than, at the time seemed likely. The older man had asked him to come into his study and, as soon as they were both comfortably seated announced:

"I wish to send through you a verbal message to your father." The young man's face showed that he welcomed, while he wondered at his statement. "There is a matter that will require our mutual attention, and in order that you may receive it it seems to me it would be better for him to come here to my home than for me

him. At the same time I will not insist upon this exact arrangement, but will leave the place of our meeting undetermined, allowing him to exercise his judgment in this respect. The time however must be soon, and certainly previous to my daughter's marriage."

There was a silence of some duration after Mr. Wane ceased speaking. Both men looked thoughtful. At length the younger, regarding his host gravely, said:

"Although I am entirely ignorant as to the nature of this message, sir, I understand that it is important and shall deliver it verbatim. I hope to return shortly myself, and it is possible my father will accompany me."

After that came the leave-taking with Bettina, almost tragic in its earnestness. He himself had not known until that time how necessary to his happiness his daily association with the girl had grown. As she in almost wild abandon clung to him, not knowing why but impelled by forces stronger than she, he whispered to her softly and yet with great intensity:

"Dear little girl, it will not be long now until I will have the right to claim you, utterly. Your life will soon be joined to mine in such a way that we need nevermore, while both live upon the earth, endure the bitterness that is at the same time a sweet, and almost overpowering happiness of parting."

The girl then raised her face from his shoulder, and with one soft white hand pushed gently back a dark and wavy lock of hair that drooped above his brow, while with her blue eyes gazing directly into his own, she said:

"I did not know that I could care so much for anyone, or anything, as I care—now—for you! I

have never known what love meant until you came to me! If you should not return," putting her brown head down once more upon his shoulder, "I think that I," clasping her hands together behind his neck, should die! I know that I should wish to do so."

He went away as bravely as he could and left her leaning forward, with clasped hands and parted lips, gazing mournfully after him.

Old Margaret found her so, and realizing how she felt relieved the situation in her own peculiar way:

"I do be afther seein' ye're downhearted, an' I be minded how I felt whin Tim O'Keefe, bad cess til him, once, wint away an' left me standin' only jist as sorry and forlorn as you be now. It seemed to me I cud not live anither day widout his handsome an' allurin' face to look at! This wan who has been stayin' here wid us do be remindin' me of Tim in manny ways. Tim O'Keefe had only jist as foine an' smooth an' slippery a tongue as this wan has, an' he had jist such dark, allurin' an' desateful eyes as this wan too, an' whin he spoke to me his voice was only jist as s-a-f-t as vilvit or a cat's fur be, the same as this wan's was whin he towld ye—whatever it was he has jist been tellin' ye. But thin, his voice was jist as different as a voice cud be the last toime that he iver addresssed himself til me. It sounded only jist as much like thunder as he cud make it sound whin he roared out . . . but what he called me thin was nather' swate' nor' darlin', an' I hope that niver in this world nor yit in anny ither world will ye be afther hearin' anny man say the burnin', scorchin', witherin' words that Tim O'Keefe yelled out til me at partin'!"


XXII

Kurk Kaleen was anxious and perturbed as he drew near the home that he had left a few short weeks before, without the most remote thought of what the immediate future held. As the distance between himself and Bettina Wane's sweet presence kept increasing it seemed as if the intangible all-pervading bond that was between them became constantly more and more apparent; it seemed to him that he could almost see her as she stood, sorrowful, almost in despair, gazing longingly after him. She was the same sweet, innocent and loving girl, and yet so strangely different, than the one that he had found among the cushions in the library of Walter Wane upon a day that now seemed very far away and yet at the same time very near. He could almost see the wide, startled, beautiful blue eyes through which she had looked out at him that day; he could almost hear her fresh, clear, girlish voice, that had grown deeper and been much intensified as their acquaintance had progressed. The conquest he had made of her young heart had in it an element of triumph, bordering upon awe that was new in his experience with women, for most of those whom he had met before were very far from being as "innocent and unsuspected" as she. He knew that he had been the very first man who had ever come so near to her, that she had felt his masculinity, and he knew too that she had latent in her nature, a magnetism, as powerful as was his own. She was no weakling, he reflected, and then he smiled, for he remembered that old Margaret

attributed her perfect health and strength to the fact that she had never laid her as a "wee wan" down upon a spot of ground where angry men had spilled each other's blood. And then his vision of her changed again, and he beheld her as she'd looked that morning, clinging to him, lingering in his embrace, thrilling him and thrilled herself by the strength of her unacknowledged, yet slumbering emotions; and then, with enthusiastic delight, he thought of her as she would be when really his own. So he dreamed and awakening from his dreams, arrived at home and stern reality.

His father had been anxiously waiting for the young man's coming, and as soon as they were entirely alone plunged at once into the subject that had been the chief cause of the letter that had brought his son to him.

"I was very much surprised," he began, holding his auditor's entire attention by the earnestness of his manner, "and, I may add, not a little pained, by the announcement in your recent letter. Walter Wane, although he has been my personal friend for very many years, is not only exceedingly eccentric but also is unfortunately reputed to be somewhat mentally unbalanced. He at one time devoted his entire energies to the following up of a Quixotic and utterly fruitless quest; the pursuit of this strange and unheard-of idea was kept up by him even after his marriage but ended, so far as any of his friends have discovered, with the birth of his daughter, which event was followed almost immediately by the death of his wife. Since that time he has lived the life of a recluse, attending only to such affairs as absolutely demanded his consideration, shutting himself up within his own mentality to the exclusion of almost all outside affairs. So that, while yet upon the



earth, he has not mingled with his fellowmen much more than if he had already left this plane of existence. How many of her father's peculiarities or how much of his inexplicable nature his daughter may have inherited I do not know, but it is probable that she in some respects resembles him. However this may be, one fact I am assured is certain: the girl has had no social training and would not be prepared in any way to fill the place that your wife would be expected—indeed, compelled—to occupy. As you are well aware, your future financial success as well as your individual happiness depends largely upon the kind of matrimonial alliance that you make. Your wife should be a woman well versed in the ways of society, if possible she should have had a wide and varied social experience, so that she would be able to cope successfully and easily with any situation that might come up, however complicated or unusual. You must have, as your life-partner a woman who is your equal," looking admiringly at his son, "educated, refined, experienced both at home and abroad, one whose family as well as herself would reflect credit upon you and give you the benefit of the advantages that they themselves had gained—instead of leaning and being a drag upon you if not a positive hindrance. I want you to understand, "he ended earnestly and affectionately," that I have been actuated in what I have been saying by a strong desire for your well-being, and not by prejudicial belief with regard to the daughter of Walter Wane—for she is no doubt a good, honest, innocent and, very likely, modest and retiring, girl."

"I cannot doubt the sincerity and kindness of your motive," the young man started out, seeing that he was expected to say something, "and I

presume that all you have said of Mr. Wane is strictly true, although he seems to me—and I have been in his society considerably during the past few weeks—a studious, extremely sensible, practical and kindly considerate gentleman. As for his daughter,” he went on, rising to his feet and beginning to pace rapidly back and forth across the room, “as I told you in my letter, I love her, dearly, and wish—in fact, intend—to make her my wife.”

“I want you to consider carefully,” the other argued diplomatically, “what you are about to do before you take a step that will be irrevocable. Marriage is a serious affair, and should not be entered into without deep reflection. I wish that you would observe other opportunities of which you might take advantage before you attach to yourself a young woman who, while she may be very charming, cannot possibly be adapted to the position that your wife must fill. *Besides*,” he ended resolutely, as if determined to bring the matter to a crisis, “not only I, myself, but many other of your friends, believed that you were practically bound, if not actually engaged, to Miss Lena Burton—before I sent you,” a little bitterly, “to visit Walter Wane.”

Kurk Kaleen did not believe in useless argument, nor did he deem that it would be his wisest course to hastily and definitely decide a matter that affected him as vitally as this. Recalling that he had a verbal message to deliver to his father, he quietly overlooked the intimation that had just been made.

“As I was leaving the home of Mr. Wane,” he said, “he asked me to bring a message to you. He told me that there was a matter of importance that would require your mutual attention. He said he

would prefer that you visit him, so that you might consult together, but that he would leave the place of meeting to be settled according to your judgment. He made it quite imperative that the time of this meeting should be soon, certainly before his daughter's marriage."

XXIII

One evening not long after his return Kurk Kaleen, with other members of his family, was privileged to be among those to attend a large, exclusive gathering of prominent and even noted people. As he entered the room more than one pair of eyes was turned in his direction, for his handsome appearance, affable, easy manner and his engaging reserved smile, together with the distinguished air that seemed always to accompany him made him unusually attractive wherever he went. He was soon sought by some of his intimate acquaintances, who had missed him during his absence and welcomed his return.

It was not long before the young man came to the group of which Lena Burton was the accepted leader, both because of the position that she occupied as her father's daughter and her own personality. As the young girl became conscious of his presence she acknowledged it in many different ways. Greeting him courteously, she made room for him among those near to her. Her expressive gray eyes, that had perceptibly brightened at his approach, were turned toward him; her countenance became even more animated than it had been before his coming; and a soft, rosy flush crept slowly up from her smooth young neck. Her voice as she addressed him had in it tones not often there. In fact a man, received as he was then, could not fail to know that Lena Burton, proud and independent, experienced and exclusive, honored, fêted, courted by those who might be considered socially his superiors, had selected *him*

as one upon whom to bestow especial favors. She soon withdrew a little from the group that had surrounded her, and beckoned to him to follow her. When they were seated at some little distance from the rest she said:

"I hear that you have just enjoyed a visit in the country. I hope you are refreshed and rested. I know that *I* have often longed to be—at least for a few weeks or months—away from the confusion and the crowds. Were very many other people there, where you have been . . . or, that is . . ." and then, with an embarrassed but a perfectly frank and natural little laugh, she ended, "I beg your pardon! I was just rambling on because it seemed the proper thing."

"I was visiting an old friend of my father's," Kurk Kaleen explained, with his usual well-poised conventionality. "No one, except the members of his immediate family, was there. His residence is situated in a very beautiful, although decidedly isolated, English environment. There is a certain charm, Miss Burton, about a country place in England, and I hope that you may some time have an opportunity to come beneath its influence yourself."

"I think that I should enjoy a visit in the country here, very much. Perhaps before I return to America I may have that pleasure. I do not suppose, though," she went on mischievously, for she had now at hand not only her customary self-possession but her usual daring as well, "that I should be fortunate enough to bring back with me from a visit to the country such a trophy as the one that you—unless reports have been greatly exaggerated—have in your possession."

Although he had already had some experience with her, he had not expected this direct attack

from her, at least in just the way it had been made, and it was his turn to hesitate. He reflected that though he himself had had no hand in it, his engagement had perhaps been rather widely advertised among those who were acquainted with him and if so Miss Burton probably had been told all that had been learned to date. This idea was followed by the thought that it might be well for him to know what had been said.

"Reports are often so distorted that they do not in any way resemble the facts. I have often noticed that a story several times repeated loses identity. As to 'trophies,' " for his resolve not to make any revelations was growing stronger all the time, "I think that I could show you some dried wild flowers, pressed carefully between the pages of a notebook."

She laughed aloud and as she watched amazement grow upon his face she kept on laughing.

"Why! I have known about Bettina Wane for years, and years and *years!* Her father and my father became great friends when Mr. Wane was traveling in America! It was through a letter from him that I was made aware" quite primly, "of your engagement to his daughter. The idea! You and your wild flowers!" laughter again taking complete possession of her. "Now that I have told you," dabbing at her eyes with a bit of cambric, for she had laughed until she cried, "what you really wanted to know, perhaps you will be nice and tell me all about Bettina, and her home, and all the little twists and turns that I will need to know about—so that I too may go into the country, and gather wild flowers, and press them in a book!"

XXIV

Not long after Kurk Kaleen's departure Bettina Wane, one afternoon, was in her favorite position among the cushions in the corner of the library, Bonny curled up beside her, and one of her highly esteemed books in her hand. She was not reading, although the book that she was holding open had upon its pages the written expression of thoughts that were to her intensely interesting. It was as if the author of the book had been describing her own recent awakening from childhood, to womanhood; she wondered if the author had passed through a similar experience, and if so whether loneliness and longing had followed it; she wondered whether loneliness and longing always followed the attainment of great happiness and if, if that were so, it were not better to be denied great happiness and so escape its inevitable result. Yet the girl was not a coward nor was she altogether selfish; she simply stood where two roads met, and hesitated before passing from one into the other.

At that moment a heavy, shuffling step resounded in the hall, then fumbling fingers felt their way along the wall and stopped when they had reached the door. Bettina knew whose step it was and so did Bonny, for the latter's ears went sharply forward and were at the same time lifted, while her bright eyes showed anticipatory joy and her plume-like tail began to wave.

"Come right in, Margaret dear! I'm here and so is Bonny!"

The old woman needed no second invitation, but as soon as she could crowd through the doorway

appeared before her youthful charge, excitedly waving a letter.

"The post do be afther lavin' this wid us, Miss darlin'!" she exclaimed. "It has a furrin' look til me," peering at it curiously. "I'm anxious to be afther seein' what's widin it!"

Bettina took the letter, and glancing at it hurriedly, immediately opened it. Her face grew rosy as she read, and looking up at her old nurse, who was watching her expectantly and fearfully, she said:

"It is from the daughter of my father's old friend, Mr. Burton; she wishes to make us a visit; and so, Margaret dear, we must at once prepare for her coming."

From that time until the arrival of Lena Burton there was so much bustling activity in and about the home of Mr. Wane that his daughter did not have much opportunity for deep reflection, but during the night after she came Bettina lay awake for hours, staring into the darkness with sensitive nerves so keyed up that they responded to the slightest sound, her inner consciousness utterly refusing to be dulled into somnolence. It almost seemed to her that she could hear, over and over in endless repetition, the gay, careless voice of her visitor as she had said:

"I understand, dear, that you are going to marry Kurk Kaleen. I wonder if you know how many women he has jilted. But then," the gay voice had trailed off into almost boisterous laughter, "I don't suppose *he* knows himself how many women he has said that he would marry—and then changed his mind. You are a brave girl, my dear, a very brave and daring girl."

The gay voice sometimes took on clarion proportions, there in the stillness of the night, so that

the girl who listened started up as if a tocsin had been sounded. And so indeed it had, and with intent to do the very work that it was doing. Bettina in her kindly innocence did not for a moment dream that this was so, for she knew nothing of intrigue or any kind of hypocritical, malignant scheming. As she lay tossing upon her own soft bed, where she had always slept since she could remember having slept at all, the one who'd thrust the javelin of unrest into her inmost soul slumbered sweetly. Lena herself, had had some restless nights about this very matter, but having settled on a method of procedure and carried out the plans, the tension of her nerves had lessened as, in exactly corresponding ratio, that of her victim's had increased.

Bettina Wane did not arrive, as under such unfortunate conditions is almost always the case, at any definite conclusion during her hours of restlessness, but arose unrefreshed and heavy-eyed the next morning in spite of her healthy youth. Old Margaret, noticing that this was so, insisted peremptorily that she should go at once into the open air. So they started out as usual upon their morning walk and just as they were leaving their visitor arrived upon the scene.

"I have been told," smiling reminiscently, "that there are many lovely wild flowers to be found near here. England seems to me so small as compared with my own country, and there are so many people everywhere, that I don't see where the wild flowers find even a place to grow."

Old Margaret had been closely watching her and at the same time waiting, and as soon as the girl ceased speaking she began:

"It do be seemin' that you two standin' there, the baith of ye together, be as like as two peas—

baith in the same pod—to two wild flowers yer-silves! I always has been minded whin I looked at my darlin' of blue violets and field daisies too, for whin a violet looks up til me like that wan there, pouncing upon a flower and bearing it in triumph to Bettina, who smilingly presented it to her guest, "it seems to me like the darlin's eyes. An' whin a violet is only just a little wet wid dew it do be makin' me remember how, whin my girlye was a wee wan, her blue eyes looked whin they was wet wid tears. I niver see a daisy lookin' up, so modest-like an' yit so phutty too, but I think that it is only jist like my darlin's face. Young gurrhls do be like flowers in manny ways," gazing admiringly at the two who were in front of her. "They do be standin' sthrait an' slim an' frish, as free as anny flower that iver grew an' only jist as beautiful—but whin a hot hand picks them off the stim they do be growin' on they do be wither-in'." She sighed and shook her head, "Ah, yis, they do be wither-in'!"

Just then Bettina thought she heard someone approaching, but as the others did not seem to notice anything she decided that her hearing was somewhat abnormal because her nerves were yet unstrung from lack of sleep. She did not look around. Had she done so she would have seen a very much surprised, in fact a startled and an almost terrified, young man. Having been told that Bettina and old Margaret had gone out for their customary morning walk, Kurk Kaleen, who had unexpectedly arrived, had followed them and he was much astonished when he saw that Lena Burton had forestalled him as it were, and was walking there demurely beside Bettina Wane. As soon as he recovered he assumed as nearly as he

could his usual air, and hurrying forward called out cheerily:

“The top o’ the morning to you, ladies! I hope that you are—all—as well and happy as you look!”

XXV

Shortly after the termination of Lena Burton's visit in the home of Walter Wane she spent an evening with her father, of whose companionship she had always been very fond. Her recent visit had been freely commented upon, and in the course of the conversation Mr. Burton asked:

"Did you notice anything peculiar about Mr. Wane? That is, did he seem strange or abnormal to you in any way?"

The girl spent a few moments in quiet reflection before she answered:

"He wasn't a bit like you, Dad; I felt sort of queer and out of place in his society, and what *did* seem odd to me was that his own daughter seemed to feel just as I did. It may be that he don't like women," she ended, smiling up into her father's face, from where she sat on a low hassock, or, anyway, young women."

"I know that he loved his young wife devotedly, and she I think loved him." As Mr. Burton spoke he laid one hand upon his daughter's heavy hair, "I saw them more than once together, and I don't believe I ever saw a happier or more congenial couple. I have been told," he went on contemptively, "that he has never been the same since his wife's death. They say that he is mourning for her constantly, and that he keeps even his own daughter at a distance."

"She isn't like me then, is she, Dad?" asked the girl, resting her head upon his knee. "You could not keep *me* off at arms' length if you tried. Bettina is a sweet girl, too," thoughtfully adding

with some solicitude, "she must be very lonely, for she has no one of her own kind near her."

"Judging from what her father wrote me recently," casually and as if the subject under discussion had no especial interest either for himself or for the girl who sat beside him, "I conclude that she will soon be under different circumstances."

"Yes, indeed," agreed the young woman without lifting her head from her father's knee, "under *very* different circumstances—that is, if the contemplated marriage is ever really consummated."

"What leads you to suppose that this will not take place?" her father asked, for he had observed an unnatural tone in his daughter's usually frank and hearty voice. "From what you have told me of the girl she is educated and refined. Her mother was a pretty woman and her father is, beyond all doubt, a capable, scholarly, courteous man."

"You are not very well acquainted, though, with Kurk Kaleen," said Lena Burton, her eyes still hidden from her father's questioning glance. "You know," looking up and quickly down again, "it always takes two to complete, as well as just to make, a bargain."

"It is true that especially attractive young men are also sometimes fickle," stated the man, patting lovingly the shining masses of golden-brown hair beneath his hand, "but I see no reason why he should be so in this case."

"Do you think, Dad," the girl asked suddenly, looking directly into his eyes, "that men and women ever act reasonably, when they're in love?"

Mr. Burton had had considerable experience

with men and women. After a thoughtful silence, during which his hand still rested on the head, upon his knee, he replied:

"There are so many different emotions spoken of as being love that it is very difficult to make a general statement. In the case we are now considering, however, it seems to me that any honorable young man, having gone so far as to propose matrimony to a girl such as you describe the daughter of Walter Wane to be would not be apt to repudiate the bargain he had made."

"Yet some men gather women's hearts, Dad, as others gather flowers—to be admired and enjoyed, and after the novelty of possession has ceased to thrill them, to be thrown away." It seemed to him that there was a trace of bitterness in her young voice. "I sometimes think," she went on a little wearily, "that modern men are not much like the men used to be. I can't think, Dad, that you yourself were ever just a hunter . . . going through the world, seeking spoils, gaining what you could for your selfish benefit without regard or pity for those to whom you brought great suffering, whose lives perhaps you wrecked, so that instead of happiness they would find only pain and disappointment and regret. Young men nowadays," she ended, reaching up and taking one of her father's hands in both of hers, and placing it beneath her soft, round cheek where it rested, against his knee, "enjoy the chase, it seems to me, as did the ones who used to roam at will across the rolling plains and through the pathless forests of our country, Dad. Only now, instead of hunting buffalo and bear and mountain lion, they hunt women's hearts. And after they have captured them," she added, snuggling her cheek down closer

yet within the hollow of her father's hand," they do not always care to keep them."

"Do you think, my daughter, that manly love has vanished from the earth?"

"I think that manly love," she answered sadly, "that is—steadfast, reverential manly love—is very rare."

"Am I then to infer," he asked gravely, "that you believe the young man of whom we have been speaking is false, fickle, incapable of honorable, uplifting, steadfast love?"

"His record in society would lead me so to believe—and he is so fascinating! His success as a hunter of hearts is not to be wondered at, after all."

She laid her bright head down again, and her father regarded her with solicitude and even anxiety. At length, as if he had decided upon something that it seemed to him he ought to do, Mr. Burton, leaning forward, almost whispered:

"Tell me, Lena, are you personally interested in this young man? Because," he went on lovingly, "if this were so it might be well for you to go back to America—at least for a while."

"Do you think," asked the girl, straightening up and leaning back with hands clasped about her knees, "that your daughter is a coward and would run away like that? You know me better, Dad! Even if I were in love with Kurk Kaleen," her voice shook a little as she pronounced the name, "I would not be afraid to meet him anywhere!"

"I know you are courageous, Lena. I do not think," he went on calmly and with firmness, "that you could be my daughter or your mother's daughter, and be otherwise. But in the case of which we have been speaking you are not the only girl to be considered. Bettina Wane is motherless

and in many ways is not situated as you are. I am sure that you would not wish to be the cause of bringing into another woman's life the bitterness and sorrow which, as we have just agreed, may come to any trusting woman who gives her life into the keeping of a fascinating but fickle man."

The girl looked at him, but in her bold, bright glance was neither affirmation nor denial.

XXVI

When Kurk Kaleen definitely decided upon a certain course he went deliberately toward the end that he desired, without regard to minor incidents that might have swerved a less determined person from the path that he was following. He continued to make preparations for his marriage, although he knew that his father strenuously opposed it. He did not confide in his associates concerning the change that he was contemplating, and yet he was very well aware that the matter was being more or less freely discussed. Most of them had never met Bettina and he did not intend that they should, until she had become his wife.

One day he visited a large art gallery where many paintings offered for sale were upon exhibition, with a view to making some selections for the walls of the home that he was planning for the reception of his bride. He had wandered back and forth among the pictures, stopping from time to time to examine one of them carefully and critically. Finally he settled down upon a divan that had been placed at a convenient angle, in a little, secluded nook where there were several paintings which pleased his fancy. He had been there but a short time when he was surprised to hear, almost at his elbow a flute-like and a well-known, vibrant voice:

"Absorbed in making plans, and dreaming of your future!" the voice exclaimed, while at the same time there came into view a vision of perfectly gowned, perfectly poised, radiant young

womanhood. "I wonder, now," she went on lightly as he courteously made room for her beside him on the divan, "if you would not like to have some superlative assistance in making your selections! Because, if so, I would be very glad to furnish it, both for your own sake," smiling, frankly and cordially, "and for the sake of my own little friend, Bettina. In fact," she ended, daringly, regarding him with something that was even warmer than mere friendship, "I might perhaps, since she is not here with you today, take her place—to some extent. Women's tastes are apt to be somewhat alike—at least, so far as paintings are concerned."

The young man was somewhat "put to it," as the old saying goes, for words, and actions too. He was not quite prepared, at least just at that time, to carry on a wild flirtation with Lena Burton, and yet as she sat there beside him, smiling, cordial, frank, and most enticing, it was as natural for him to pick up the gauntlet that she'd thrown down as it had been for her to cast it at his feet. He compromised by treating her, as nearly as he could, as if she had been Bettina's sister, or as if he himself had been—although he did not succeed effectually in carrying out this pretense—her brother.

"It is true that I am greatly in need of expert assistance," he began, adroitly increasing the distance that had somehow narrowed between them, on the divan, "for I have been sitting here now for some little time trying to decide as to which of these two paintings," rising to his feet and going over to stand for a few moments before first one of them and then the other, "I like the better. Sometimes I think that it is this," regarding it closely and critically, while he stood gracefully

before it; "and then, "going over to the other and carefully inspecting it, "it seems to me that I like this! Now which," he ended, stepping back in order to allow her to pass in front of him, "would be your choice?"

The girl arose, for she had remained upon the divan, and as she passed before him the young man was poignantly conscious of the subtle perfume that emanated from the floating and artistic garments that only half concealed the free, lithe movements of her supple, slender figure. Her fingers touched his hand. Instantly those soft white fingers, as if without volition except their own primitive desire closed about the hand that they had touched; and it, also, as it seemed without volition other than its own, clutched and clung to hers. So they stood. Both were conscious of the force that held them; each had a distinct idea as to whither it would lead. Yet they clung there as if holding to a spar, with wild, tempestuous waters swirling all about; and then it seemed to Kurk Kaleen as if he saw Bettina's pale and earnest face, as if he saw her great, blue eyes looking up into his own, while she said as he was leaving her, "If you should not return to me I think that I should die." He loosed his hold upon the soft white fingers that were clinging to his hand and the girl, realizing that the spell was somehow broken, passed on until she stood alone before a painting.

"After all, I don't suppose that I can help you very much. I think that you would find Bettina's taste quite different than mine, at least with reference to pictures. Sometimes," she went on easily and almost indifferently, "a young girl who seems pliable and yielding will develop into a very strong-willed, even almost domineering, woman.

Sometimes," she ended, turning toward him now and smiling as frankly and cordially as was her wont, "a mere outsider cannot judge or greatly help two lovers."

• After that they talked of immaterial matters. They did not speak of marriage or of love, or of Bettina Wane, or even of themselves.

XXVII

"I'll go wid ye, darlin'," cried old Margaret O'Keefe, her face with its many criss-cross wrinkles convulsed with weeping. "I'll go wid ye, ferninst anything that thries to sthop me, right up to the stips of the altar itsilf, an' whin ye do be comin' down off of thim stips afther ye have laid yer swate young life widin the hands that do be graspin' afther ye, only jist as soon as ye begin to come to yer right sinse—ye will be afther findin' auld Margaret waitin' fer ye."

Bettina had wished to have the ceremony that would unite her to the man who had awakened within her the strongest emotions that she had ever thus far known, performed upon the spot where they had met. In accordance with this it had been arranged to have the marriage take place in the library of her home, with only those as witnesses who were closely associated with the contracting parties. Old Margaret, when she saw that there was nothing else to do, withdrew her open opposition to and actively engaged in making preparations for the wedding; Mr. Wane, after having held the conference with Kurk Kaleen's father upon which he had insisted, settled back apparently into the grooves to which he had become accustomed through years of comparative isolation. He seemed, although the head of the house, without much thought as to what was going on within it; Barney McCoy, since his services as tutor were no longer required had, at least for the time disappeared. The two young people were left very much to themselves and so

had ample opportunity to become better acquainted with each other although, as is often the case with lovers, they did not take advantage of it. One afternoon shortly before the day that had been chosen they were seated upon the couch, among the cushions, in the corner of the library. The young man had just been telling his prospective bride about some of the well-known places of great interest which he hoped soon to visit with her; she had been particularly anxious to know how much time would be required to complete the journey they intended to take immediately after their marriage. Evidently surprised at this attitude on her part, he with some emphasis asked:

"Why should you care, little girl?" He added lovingly, "We will be *together*."

"Margaret will be anxious to have me with her again," she answered calmly, "and I know that Bonny will miss me sadly."

He looked at her curiously, as if considering what it would be best for him to say. Before he spoke he took her hand gently but firmly in his own and held it so, occasionally stroking the back of it with the fingers of his other hand while he said:

"Do you not think, Bettina, that my love, alone could fill your life?"

She did not take her hand from his warm clasp, and somehow, instead of trembling as it had often done beneath his touch, it rested there, cool, calm, capable. At length, and in her voice there was a sound that was new and strange, she said:

"It does not seem to me that love could ever wholly take the place of duty. I do not think that I would have the right to desert old Margaret and Bonny now, even if I wished: Margaret held me

in her arms when I first came into this world, and has always loved and cared for me; I have separated Bonny from the balance of her kind and made her daily needs and expectations quite different than those of ordinary dogs. As they both grow older, the two who are dependent on me will need my understanding care more even than heretofore—and I must give it to them. It is the duty of the strong,” her blue eyes did not quail beneath his glance, that now was almost stern, “to shield the weak. These two of whom I have been speaking are pitifully weak in many ways, and I,” she ended proudly, almost distantly, “as compared with them, am strong.”

He saw that she was very much in earnest, and in the haughty, impenetrable atmosphere that it seemed she was about to throw around herself he recognized a likeness to her father's cold austerity. He shuddered and almost involuntarily sprang to his feet. He began to pace rapidly back and forth, at some little distance from the couch where the girl quietly remained; then all at once the tension seemed relieved by some arresting thought, and softly, almost humbly, he came and stood before her.

“Bettina,” he began, “I am not worthy of you. Are you certain that you love me—well enough to marry me? It is not even now too late,” he went on, not waiting for an answer, “for you to send me from you if you wish to do so.”

The girl, as if suddenly galvanized into action, rose, and moving swiftly started toward the door as if about to leave the room. He did not try to hinder her, unless the appealing glances that he sent after her could be interpreted as hindrances. Her hand was on the doorknob, but before she turned it, as if shaken by a wave of tenderness,

she faced about, and though her lips and chin were trembling, her voice was steady as she said:

"If you desire to be released from our engagement I wish that you would say so, frankly. I have been told," she went on desperately, for he stood still as if he had been frozen into silence, "that you have more than once refused to marry someone, after having promised. . . ."

But Kurk Kaleen had heard enough to satisfy him that it was pride and not her lack of love for him that stood between him and the happiness he craved. He did not let her finish all that she had evidently meant to say, but smothered the last few words that were indeed already on her lips, against his breast. Holding her closely within the circle of his arms, between the kisses, he showered on her soft, red lips, he whispered:

"Dear little girl, we must never allow anything to come between us again! There is nothing in this world big enough to overshadow love. Pride must fall, jealousy flee, before it! My love for you is the strongest and purest emotion of which I am capable! Even if we should grow very old together—I would not then have time enough to prove to you how much I love you. The love that you in your sweet innocence have given me is the most precious jewel I have ever had, can ever have, in my keeping! There is nothing anywhere in this wide world, or yet in any world beyond this one, that I would accept in exchange for you. Let us never again torture each other by even thinking of separation! As I told you long ago, dear little one, we two were intended, from the very beginning, each for the other. And *soon*," he ended, holding her at arms' length and looking rapturously into her animated, blushing face, "*we will* belong, utterly, to each other!"

XXVIII

On the day that was to be her wedding day Bettina Wane rose even earlier than usual. She left the house quietly, with the intention of taking alone a sort of farewell view of the scenes with which from her earliest recollection she had been most familiar. She had not gone far however before she heard the quick patter of agile feet, and a cold nose just touched her hand in passing as Bonny bounded into the path that was before her, and frisked along well pleased at the prospect of the morning ramble. The girl called her pet back and told her to walk beside her, which she did soberly, suiting her pace to that of her young mistress. After a little the dog's ears were pointed sharply forward, raised a little as if she were listening intently, and soon her bushy tail began to slowly wave. Bettina was as sure then as if she had been told in actual words that her old nurse had discovered her absence, and was in pursuit. Soon she descried the old woman's clumsy form approaching, and turning about the girl went back over the path she had just traversed. Almost before she was in hailing distance old Margaret began:

"I do be minded, darlin', of how once, whin you were a wee wan, ye shlipped away from me—for you were only jist as full of mischief as ither wee wans—an' afther I had hunted *iverywhere* an' couldn't find ye *annywhere*, I found ye here, toddlin' along as bold as annything, yer blue eyes shinin', wid a flower that ye'd pulled off of its stem, all withered up an' dyin', in yer hand."

"Margaret dear," the girl said softly, "Margaret dear, I caused you lots of worry, didn't I?"

"Darlin'," cried the old woman fervently, "I wish wid all my heart that, instid of bein' at this ind of the journey we've wint together, we cud be at the beginnin' of it! I don't now remimber a single stip I iver took for yer swate sake I wudn't take agin wid joy! I do be afther wonderin', manny toimes I do be afther wonderin', will ye iver forget the manny good toimes that we've had, the baith of us at the same toime, together?"

"You can remind me of them, Margaret dear," Bettina answered cheerily and lovingly, "in case you think that there is any danger that I'll forget them. As I've often told you, Margaret dear, you will be always near me."

"Darlin'," Margaret O'Keefe's old hands, as well as her old voice, were shaking, "I do be afther askin' ye wan question that I niver yit have asked—do ye be afther thinkin' that, if yer mither cud be here wid us this day, if yer mither cud be standin' here," for in her earnestness she had come to a complete and cumbersome standstill, "instid o' me, she wud be doin' annything for her wee wan that auld Margaret cud do an' has not done?"

"Margaret dear," the girl said, putting her hands on the old woman's shoulders and looking affectionately into her eyes, "if I had been *your own* wee wan, you could not have been kinder to me, more thoughtful of me, than you have been. My mother, as I hope," she added solemnly, "is watching over me today, and could she speak to us I think that she would thank you for the care that you have given me—and tell me never to allow anything, while we both live, to keep me permanently from you."

As the three companions turned toward the house they ascended a little knoll from which considerable of the surrounding country could be plainly seen. When they had reached the top of it Bettina Wane stood still, and with folded arms looked about her; the old nurse watched her, weeping as silently as she could; and the wondering dog stood between the two women, looking first at one of them, then at the other. Bonny knew that something that would greatly affect the lives of all three was about to happen. She did not know what it was or how it would affect them, but she felt the tenseness of the mental atmosphere and was conscious of suppressed excitement. After a short time during which no word was spoken, the girl, followed by her two companions, passed quietly along the well-known path in which the three had so often walked before.

Just at midday Bettina Wane and Kurk Kaleen stood before the few persons assembled in the library where the girl had spent so many hours of her maidenhood, and took upon themselves the vows that made them man and wife. Almost immediately after the ceremony the few guests dispersed. Arrangements were made for the departure of the young couple upon their contemplated journey, and until these were completed all was bustle and activity in and about the place. When all the preparations had been finished and the time decided upon had not yet actually arrived, there was a lull.

Walter Wane had witnessed the marriage of his daughter with an outward appearance of what almost any disinterested onlooker would have said approached indifference; after the nuptial ceremony had been performed he had acted, as the father of the bride, with native dignity and easy

grace. When the outsiders went away he retired to his study with scarcely the exchange of a private word with either his daughter or her husband; there he quietly remained until just before the arrival of the time for Bettina's going away from her childhood's home. Then, swiftly and yet without haste, he appeared before the young couple. As Mr. Wane approached they moved forward to meet him, Bettina's features displaying the great respect, amounting almost to reverence, that she had always felt toward him. Upon the young man's countenance there was some slight embarrassment, it is true, but this was far outweighed by another and much more powerful emotion, that indeed dominated and directed the whole force of his being. This was the sort of triumphant buoyancy that almost invariably accompanies the attainment, by a human being, of an end that has been greatly desired; this emotion gave an added brilliancy to his fine dark eyes, and made his face seem older and more sedate, while at the same time it had never before appeared so vitally young. It was as if he carried with him an enchanted, most magnetic atmosphere by which he himself was so completely surrounded that the magic influence reached out and enveloped even those with whom he came in contact. Mr. Wane was conscious of the strength of this emotion, and recognized in it a feeling he himself had known. He stopped, directly in front of the young pair and regarding them seriously, said with great candor:

"You are now upon the threshold of an intimate companionship such as neither of you have, before this, known from your actual experience. Marriage is different than any other relation that can exist between two people. You two are now together, set apart from the rest of your kind. You

have declared openly, before the world, that you prefer each other to everything else of which you are conscious. It is now possible for each of you to bring to the other supreme happiness—and at the same time it is also possible for you to bring, each to the other, untold suffering and lasting sorrow. The way in which this marvelous power can be exerted by you is for you, alone, to discover. No two individuals are sufficiently alike to warrant me—for I am but another human being—in giving you exact advice.”

XXIX

With funds furnished by his father, Kurk Ka-leen had provided a comfortable and in some respects luxurious abiding place to which he intended, a few weeks after their marriage, to return with his bride. Bettina had arranged to have old Margaret repair to the new home soon after she herself had left her father's house, as she felt certain that the old woman would be happier during her absence, busily engaged in preparing for her return, than she would if left to brood beside the nest, from which the one for whom she cared had flown.

On the morning the old nurse arrived at the new domicile she, feeling the importance of the position that she occupied as the representative of the mistress of the place, made a deliberate survey of the premises; she was accompanied upon this tour by one who was as curious and at the same time anxious as she herself. The collie nosed out everything that had been even handled by Bettina and when, as sometimes happened, she came upon some of the girl's own personal belongings, she gave unmistakable evidence of her great satisfaction, followed up each clue she thought she'd found, and showed her disappointment when she failed to find her mistress after each search was ended. There was one room particularly attractive to both the woman and the dog. To this they would return from time to time, and settle down as if they felt more natural and at home there than in any other part of the commodious dwelling. About the middle of the forenoon they

had wandered back to what, as it appeared to them, was the safest and best place that they could find. Old Margaret was seated in a low, wooden rocking-chair and Bonny stood beside the chair, with her long, sharp muzzle resting on her good friend's lap. The old nurse had been upon the verge of tears, and as the collie's great, brown, sympathetic eyes looked up into her face she gently stroked the golden head, and lifted up a corner of her apron, wiping first one dim eye and then the other as she said:

"I do be afther wonderin' where our own darlin' is this day, an' if she do be remimbrin'! I do be mindin' how, whin she had only been away an hour or so, she wud go runnin' through the house an' out intil the yard, annywhere an' iverywhere at all, at all, until she'd find us, baith of us at the same toime togither, you an' me! I do be wonderin' why it is that dogs and women have to suffer so, an' only jist because they do be afther lovin' something else besides thimselves! If she onct sint for us we'd go to her, the baith of us at the same time togither, through fire an' flood, an' thick an' thin, an' burnin' turf, an' even holy water," she startled herself by this last assertion, but did not retract it. "But here we be like two big ninnies, widout a thought bechune us baith but only jist to mourn. An' thin we do be afther thinkin' how 'twill be whin she wid her blue eyes shinin' an' her swate voice callin', will be wid us again! An so," she ended, as she arose from the chair, and closely followed by the dog was about to leave the room, "as long as there do be such unsuspected ninnies as dogs and women, annywhere, there will be sufferin' an' love. An' yit," she added, as if she felt that she should modify the statement she had made, "our darlin'

is so swate an' clane that nayther wan of us shud be called a ninny only jist for lovin' her."

She had almost reached the door and as she was about to open it she turned and idly looked behind her, catching sight dimly of her own reflection in a long mirror that had been placed between two windows in such a manner as to exactly face the door. Instantly she crouched upon the floor in as small a heap as she could make herself, threw her apron over her head and began to rock back and forth, croning a queer little, broken lullaby in a high, cracked voice, the accents of which evidenced her superstitious fears and penitential pleading. Bonny took no part in this remarkable performance, but stood quietly at some little distance from the old woman, watching her with great interest, as was shown by the animated expression of her face and the cocked condition of her sensitive ears. At length the song, if so it could be called, dwindled down; finally came to an end, and then old Margaret, wallowing around, awkwardly, managed after awhile to get upon her lumbering old knees. In this prayerful attitude, with hands clasped together and held up until they were about even with her chin, eyes tightly closed and twitching nervously, she lifted her voice in supplication:

"I do be afther askin' ye, dear hivinly Father, to kape from my poor wee wan the danger that do be afther threatenin' her swate loife! Bring her back til me, dear hivinly Father, bring my own darlin' back til me—an' I do be afther promisin' that niver, from the toime that I set these auld eyes on her swate face again, will Margaret O'Keefe spake annything excipt with great respect concernin' holy water. I do be afther knowin' what ye mane, dear hivinly Father, by sindin'

me the warnin' that I've only jist resaved; I know my wee wan is in danger, an' if auld Margaret cud kape it from her she wud gladly put hersilf bechune it an' her darlin'. I hope that there will niver be necissity to sind anither warnin' to auld Margaret, but whin ye do be sindin' her anither one, I do be afther askin' ye, dear hivinly F'ather, I do be afther askin' ye to plaze sind down a better-lookin' angel—wan that do be not so wild an' scairt an' sinseless as the wan ye sint today."

On the day it was expected that the bride and groom would enter their new home Margaret O'Keefe was very busy. Bonny followed her patiently from place to place, but did not interfere with any of her numerous activities. She picked up every broom, both large and small, that she could find, and carried them to a spot that she had selected as the safest one available for temporary concealment.

"There!" she exclaimed, partly to herself and partly to her canine companion, "me darlin' can't stip over anny of thim now!"

She herself made the bride's cake that was to be served as a portion of the first meal of which the newly married pair would partake under their own roof; she carefully measured and tested the ingredients of this cake, putting in just the right kinds and amounts of spices and fruits as well as other necessary materials, so that, as she believed, the young wife would have every opportunity to find variety as well as happiness in her new life. She spent considerable time and energy in collecting old shoes, and she had quantities of rice for use at a moment's notice. She made these preparations with the hope that in this way she would prevent Bettina from ever being footsore or hungry. She diligently made preparations so

that, no matter in what way the bride would approach the house, she would enter her own door for the first time by passing over a pathway lined with flowers.

When the young couple actually did arrive, the old nurse had been stationed for some time where she could command a complete view of the street, so that she was at the outer door when they reached it. The first thing they saw when they opened this door was a small, bright basin that old Margaret was holding out toward them with as much dignity and solemnity as she could muster for the occasion. In this basin was a small quantity of holy water which, as they entered, she emptied upon them, believing that in this way she kept evil spirits from crossing their own threshold with them.

"Margaret, dear!" cried Bettina, settling down for a few moments in a little wooden rocking-chair, "it surely seems like home to me to find you two—" for she had taken Bonny's face between her hands, and was looking deeply into the great brown eyes "—waiting for me here."

XXX

When Kurk Kaleen appeared socially for the first time with his wife they were the cynosure of many eyes. Among those who sought an introduction to the bride were some who were actuated almost exclusively by curiosity, while others really wished to become acquainted with the diffident but exceedingly attractive girl who had, without openly entering the lists at all, won a heart and hand over the attainment of which many fierce although often silent battles had been fought. Among the first were Lena Burton and her father. They came up together and after congratulations had been easily and gracefully given the two girls naturally began to converse together, while Mr. Burton addressed himself particularly to the young man. After a time, however, the older man spoke directly to the young wife:

"I met your mother," he said kindly, "when she was traveling in America with your father."

The expression of Bettina's face, that had up to that moment been one of polite interest, changed at once. Her eyes became brighter, the color in her soft cheeks deepened, her entire countenance became more animated and she leaned a little toward the speaker, as if she did not wish to lose the sound of a single syllable of what he chose to say. When he had ceased speaking she asked earnestly:

"Do you think that I resemble her in any way? I have never known," she explained to the other members of the little group, "anything of my

mother's personal appearance except what my old nurse has told me."

"Your mother," he began, "was a smaller woman than you. I remember that the top of her head barely came to your father's shoulder. Your mother's age must have been about the same that yours is, the last time I saw her, although I believe she appeared somewhat older than you do. Her eyes were considerably darker than yours are, but your hair is almost exactly the color that hers was; your voice," he ended, "resembles hers greatly."

"Do I," she then inquired eagerly, "seem to you at all as my father did, when he was young and happy?"

Mr. Burton looked at her, smiling reminiscently.

"I have never met a more determined and yet a more conservative young fellow than your father. He had very decided opinions and was frank in expressing them, even if he knew that they would meet with strenuous opposition. He was idealistic, yet practical and reasonable. He was a charming conversationalist, a fluent and interesting talker. He was an ardent humanitarian, a consistent believer in the rights of everything that lives. I never knew anyone who seemed to be as anxious as was he to meet and study into the mentalities of other human beings. Yet they tell me that he has for years led a secluded and almost a solitary life."

"I wonder," said Bettina, shaken out of her usual diffidence by this description of the one whom she had always almost worshipped, "if under circumstances similar to those that surrounded his upbringing I might have developed a personality that resembled his!"

"Your daily association with him," reasoned

Mr. Burton in spite of a warning glance his daughter cast in his direction, "must have overcome to a great extent the dissimilarity in your childish surroundings. By the way," he went on, obtusely disregarding his daughter's well-meant endeavors to stop him, "is your father continuing the study in which he was formerly so much interested, or has he laid it aside for something else. And if so, what line of thought is he now engaged upon?"

Kurk Kaleen had been watching the expressions that came and went on his young wife's face, and seeing a baffled, cornered look begin to take the place that had been filled by satisfied pride and affectionate longing, decided it was time for him to interfere. Accordingly, without giving Bettina an opportunity to answer the question addressed to her, he himself, speaking as carelessly as possible, replied:

"I believe that Mr. Wane has been quietly carrying on the study to which you refer; that is, he has been following out certain lines of research closely connected with it. I think," he went on, gratified to see the helpless look upon the face that he was watching give place to an expression of mild wonder, "that he will soon return to the same field of endeavor in which he was working at the time you met him—in fact, I hope that *we*," smilingly indicating the other member of his new family, "may be able to assist, perhaps accompany him, in this work."

"I am sure it is a worthy one," asserted Mr. Burton, and added, smilingly regarding Walter Wane's daughter, "you and your father have an efficient helper now."

After the exchange of appropriate courtesies, Lena Burton and her father moved on to other

groups, but not before the American girl had sent another barbed shaft winging its way toward the defenseless heart of Kurk Kaleen's bride. Just before they separated she whispered:

"Do not be surprised, Bettina, if your husband is often away from home."

The young man was pleasantly satisfied to find how easily he had adjusted himself to the relations that he had so recently assumed, and turning to his companion when they were again for a few moments, alone, said to her in a guarded tone of voice:

"Dear little girl, I hope that I may be always at hand when you need my protection."

Bettina did not answer him in words, but her eyes were dark and humid, and the long look they gave him was full of faith and human love.

The girl was like a sturdy, vigorous young tree that has been always solitary, spreading its healthy, glistening leaves beneath the wide blue sky, sending its roots deep down into the yielding and life-giving earth, finding only strength and beauty in both sunshine and rain, without support and needing none; until at length it is transplanted to an entirely different atmosphere; until it feels upon its delicate and untried twigs the impact of strange upbuilding or destructive forces, until it trembles or is powerfully shaken by the approach of sudden storms. Then, if it find nearby another sturdy, vigorous young tree already acclimated, it gladly leans against it. And the branches of the two intertwine, so that they are united and together meet whatever winds may blow.

XXXI

Kurk Kaleen had never been compelled to earn his own livelihood, and yet he had not been entirely dependent upon his parents for support, as a maternal ancestor had willed him a steady income. His education had been liberal and during its acquisition he had met those who had opened certain social doors that otherwise might have remained closed. Once inside he had not needed other aid than his own natural gifts. His father, having been held back as he believed because he had to depend in every way upon his own efforts, was very ambitious as to his son's career and hoped that, through the latter's association with the sons and daughters of diplomats and statesmen he might—with his own extremely fascinating personality and the fact that he was not handicapped by poverty as he himself had been—advance until he had reached a position of high honor, possibly even fame. It seemed to the father that a suitable matrimonial alliance would greatly assist Kurk in forging ahead of the majority of those with whom he was associated, and as Lena Burton, besides being the daughter of the American ambassador, was in every way that wealth, education and personal advantages could make her, a perfect match for his handsome and gifted son. The girl was particularly desirable as the boy's life partner. Hence it was that he had tried in every way to hinder and failing in this, had accepted with great dissatisfaction, his marriage to Bettina Wane, whom he recognized only as a modest, gentle, virtuous and well-intentioned girl.

After the conference, with her father, upon which indeed the latter had insisted, he had for her a deeper respect than he had had before, but he was still far from being reconciled to her as a daughter-in-law. In fact, the more he thought about the matter, the more displeased he became with an arrangement that had been carried out against his will, although he himself had been the unwitting cause of the meeting that had led up to it.

One day not long after Kurk Kaleen's marriage, Lena Burton, much to her amazement, was handed his father's calling card. As soon as he was ushered in he took advantage of the fact that he happened to find her alone, by speaking with the utmost frankness.

"I wish to ask you something, Miss Burton that may sound strangely coming from me, especially at this time. I want to ask you, Miss Burton, whether or not my son ever definitely made a proposal of marriage to you? I am asking you this," he explained without waiting for a reply, "so that I may know how to govern myself concerning a matter that will very soon be presented for my consideration. I wish to assure you that any information you may give me will be looked upon as sacred."

At this one time, in all her life, the girl's almost unlimited self-assurance came near to failing her. She moistened her red lips as if to find a passage for the words that she was having some difficulty in mustering into her service. At length, as if she had just managed to bring her forces into battle formation, she looked at her visitor wonderingly, and exclaimed:

"I didn't suppose that anyone this side of the Atlantic would say a thing like this! I wonder," she went on, regarding him sharply, "if you are

altogether sane! I tell you what I'll do," going over to a house telephone, "I'll call my father," taking down the receiver, "and let him talk to you!"

She called her father, but while she was waiting for his answer she heard someone come into the hall. Rushing to the door that opened into it she saw that he had just entered the house.

"Dad!" she cried excitedly, "Dad! Come, I want you!"

"What is it, Lena?" asked Mr. Burton placidly as he entered the room, expecting to find as usual some insignificant cause for the attitude she had taken. "Tell me all about it, daughter!" he went on, realizing that her face was pale and that her hands as they clung to his arm were trembling. "Tell your dad all about it." Then, noticing for the first that they were not alone, he addressed the other man, "Did you wish to see me, sir?"

Kurk Kaleen's father knew that he had crowded himself into a very uncomfortable corner, into a place it would be hard to get out of gracefully. He looked at his interrogator soberly, for a long moment, before he answered him:

"I came here to ask Miss Burton for some information that I wished, very much, to gain. She, however," evidently with keen disappointment, "does not seem disposed to tell me what I want to know."

Mr. Burton looked inquiringly at his daughter, and then appraisingly at her visitor. After a while, addressing the latter, who lingered as if still hoping to gain the end he sought, he said:

"I must leave my daughter's decision in this matter to her own good judgment. She has had considerable experience and is usually very just and reasonable. However," he ended, noting that

an expression almost of despair was settling over the other man's countenance, "if she wishes to consult with me we will talk the matter over when we are alone. And, if we decide that it is best, we will communicate with you."

To say that Kurk Kaleen's father was crest-fallen would not adequately express the condition of his mind, for he had counted a great deal upon this interview, and as it appeared now it had been a complete failure. He therefore turned, sadly and silently, and bowing courteously to the ambassador and his daughter was about to leave the room, when suddenly the ringing accents of the girl's clear voice arrested him:

"What he wanted me to tell him, Dad, was whether his son, who is now married, had ever asked me to marry him!" and then, the humor of the situation striking her, she went off into peal after peal of musical laughter, so infectious that the two men in spite of everything began to smile sympathetically.

After she had gone clear to the top of the scale of harmonious tones, and down to the bottom again, over and over, she suddenly ceased laughing and going across the room to where her caller was standing, stupidly staring at her, stopped exactly in front of him. Dropping a curtsy, she declared, "It grieves me sorely, sir, to be obliged to inform you that your son has never really out-and-out in so many irrevocable words, asked me to marry him. If he had," she ended saucily, and yet also almost seriously, "you might have had—I do not say you would have had, and yet, who knows?—the honor to be my father-in-law."

XXXII

Walter Wane, although he had led a secluded and almost a solitary life, had become accustomed to certain sounds in and about his dwelling-place. Bettina's fresh, clear voice, calling in the hall, outside his study-door, her quick, light steps up or down the stairs had been intimately pleasant noises to which he had listened, if unconsciously, gladly. The collie's cheerful bark, accompanying or welcoming her mistress, the quick patter of her agile feet, were sounds that indicated to the lonely man youth and strength and happiness. Old Margaret's lumbering tread and the quavering, indefinite tones of her cracked voice, whether running on like a babbling brook, monotonously and more or less conversationally, or raised and lowered rhythmically, according to her interpretation of harmonious, lilting melodies, were considered by him a part of the machinery of his household. Barney McCoy had felt called upon to report to him, at regular intervals, the progress of his pupil's intellectual advancement, and for this reason if for no other even the egotistic little tutor's absence from the place was greatly felt by the owner of it. Walter Wane discovered that his almost empty house cried out to him as if it were protesting against its own emptiness, as if its hollow voice were demanding, vociferously, the return of that which had gone out from it.

One day the father of Bettina, some little time after her marriage, heard a quick, light tap upon his study door, as if it had been made by a strong

and steady, and yet a delicate and nervous hand. Rising from his chair he crossed the room hastily, fully expecting, when he opened the door, to see his daughter before him. He was somewhat surprised therefore, to meet Lena Burton's cool gray eyes. He held the door wide and stepped back, thus silently inviting her to enter, which she did at once, tripping lithely to a chair that faced the one in which he usually sat. When they were both comfortably seated the visitor began, without preliminary excuse.

"Dad has often told me, Mr. Wane, what he could remember concerning a certain study in which you were engaged when he met you in America. I have always been much interested in what I have been able to learn about this, and I should like very much to understand it more fully than I have thus far been able to do. You are the only one, so far as I know," looking at him appealingly, "who could enlighten me—and I have been wondering if you would be willing to do so."

She stopped and looked at the one addressed, as if she wished to see what effect she had had upon him. After a moment's inspection, as if satisfied with the progress she had made, although she had not succeeded in eliciting any remark from her host, she continued:

"Of course, I would not expect regular lessons or anything like that, but I thought that maybe," she hesitated, for even her nonchalance was affected by the aloofness of his manner, "you would give me some ideas as to what books to read, so that I might at least gain the rudimentary knowledge as a foundation for further understanding. Sometime you might again visit America, and if so I might be able to assist *you* in some way, if

only I knew how to go about it. And so," she ended a little lamely, it is true, and still, with considerable remaining spirit, "I thought perhaps you would be willing to help me—find the way."

The man who faced her had not been pursuing the study in which she had just professed so great an interest altogether fruitlessly, for as he looked upon her animated countenance and listened to the eager, even anxious, tones of her smooth voice he sought for and discovered beneath the surface of her personality what seemed the underlying motive that had prompted her in the daring step that she had just taken. This motive was not entirely a worthy one; in fact, the more carefully he examined into it the more fully he became convinced that it was almost altogether if not quite *unworthy*. His fatherly instinct, which was perhaps even stronger on account of its long suppression, warned him that in some way his own daughter's happiness or at the least her peace of mind was at stake. Taking all this into consideration he guardedly and appraisingly said:

"The study to which you refer is of so complicated and far-reaching a nature that very few could, in an ordinary life-time, gain sufficient mastery of it to enable them practically to use the knowledge furnished through its consideration. I may sometime," he went on courteously, as if the matter to which he had barely referred had been entirely disposed of, "visit America again and in that case I should certainly try to renew the very pleasant acquaintance that I had the honor to have with your father." Rising as if he considered the interview about to be closed, "I have some very vivid memories of the splendid hospitality that Mr. Burton extended to my wife and to myself."

Either Walter Wane had never met an American girl who was the exact counterpart of the one who stood before him, for she had risen when he had done so, or he had forgotten what is generally accepted as a national characteristic of her countrymen, for he was evidently unprepared for and considerably shocked by the ease with which she overlooked his dignified attempts to evade the onslaught she had made upon what he considered his own private affairs. She walked toward the door, politely conducted thither by her host, but just before they reached it she stopped, and meeting directly his detached and coldly distant gaze declared:

"I'll have Dad come down here with me soon, Mr. Wane, and perhaps in the meantime you will be kind enough to make a list of the books that you think I ought to read in order to seriously begin the study that we have been speaking of. I'm sure that you've been very good," smiling brightly into his puzzled face and extending her hand to him cordially, "to bother with me at all! I must seem very ignorant to you—but I really want to learn."

XXXIII

Human beings are sometimes so blinded by what seem to be perfectly natural and even unavoidable emotions that they go along a certain path for some distance before they fully realize whither it is leading. Almost any new environment holds within itself, through its very strangeness, a sort of mysterious, enticing glamor that may be but a thin, well-polished veneer or, on the contrary, some reflection of dependable, lasting qualities that are beneath.

Despite old Margaret's many affectionate precautions, and even the depth and intensity of the passionate admiration that she felt for her young husband, Bettina Kaleen sat one day in the low wooden rocking-chair that was part of the furnishings of her own room and looked down, figuratively, at a little heap of dull gray ashes that represented to her all that remained of the light and warmth of a faith so perfect and beautiful that it had mounted almost to the height of a religious fervor. This faith, judged according to the standards of the pure-minded, innocent girl that Bettina Wane had been, was now but a caustic and most disquieting memory. She had looked upon everything that Kurk Kaleen had told her as absolute truth, because she herself was truthful. After they had been actually united in marriage, so that they too were in the eyes of the law and of society as one, she had built up, through the aid of her imagination an imposing and artistic structure in which they two alone could dwell. Within this was to be, according to

the builder's plan, harmonious and lasting love, so strong and true that it would but grow stronger if it should be assailed by any outside influence. Those inside this dwelling could look out upon the world readily and easily, but its windows were so cunningly constructed that they became at once opaque if anyone outside attempted even casually to inspect any portion of the interior. The privacy of the two who were within the structure was complete. This dwelling that Bettina Kaleen had built was when she had finished it to her entire satisfaction, fireproof—so that anger or envy or malice not only had no effect upon its stability, but were effectually turned away if for any reason they came near; it was also burglar-proof—as there was no way by which a thief could enter it except through the connivance of one of its occupants. She had named this structure marital faith, typifying what alone could make the union of the two beautiful, or for her even possible. The girl had given herself wholly to her husband, because she was a strongly sexed, magnetic, perfectly normal girl, and he had aroused in her because of his fascinating personality and the manly love he professed, a wild and passionate, but hitherto dormant, primitive desire.

At the same time she was possessed of a keen, although so far little-used sagacity. This quality of her mentality was so *canny* that it could ferret out as if instinctively the most minute and carefully hidden facts, if her will power were allowed full sway over her understanding. And it was her sagacity that called her attention to a danger that was threatening to destroy the dwelling which, as she supposed, was built entirely of indestructible material. All the strength of her untarnished, wifely love flew at once to the defense of her mar-

ital faith, and she even tried to hoodwink her sagacity into believing it had been mistaken as to the threatened danger. But when doubt once assumed the place that had been occupied by confidence, a light was thrown upon what her sagacity had discovered, so that it stood out clearly and she could no longer be mistaken as to its nature. She was too young and naturally well poised to give herself over wholly to despair, and in spite of positive proof to the contrary there would from time to time creep into her mind a hovering hope that she would somehow soon awaken from what seemed to her an ugly dream. Her inner life, up to the time of her marriage, had been so solitary that it did not occur to her to consult with anyone concerning what had happened.

Today old Margaret came in, as was her frequent custom, and seeing the young woman sitting quietly there, without apparently being engaged in any way, looked sharply at her, but noticing no indications of physical illness upon her wee wan's face made no comment. Bettina, however, as her old nurse was about to leave the room, said:

"Margaret, dear, do you think that you would like to go home with Bonny and me tomorrow? I do not know exactly how long we might stay."

"Yu do be afther knowin', darlin', that I wud go wid ye wheriver ye wud say, an' all that I wud iver ask wud be to look at your swate face! To see ye sit there so solemn-like an' sthills makes me remimber how I felt that day whin Tim O'Keefe wint off for good and all. But thin," she ended shrewdly, as if trying to do away with the implication she had made, "bad cess til him—no wan iver said that Tim O'Keefe was a *born* jintleman."

The girl was silent and the smile with which

she tried to dismiss old Margaret was somewhat forced. As soon as she was again alone she returned to the contemplation of the little heap of dull, gray ashes that, as it seemed to her, was lying there before her. After a time she arose and began quietly and systematically, to make preparations for the journey she had decided upon.

While she was so engaged she heard a quick, strong step approaching. This sound had hitherto been welcome, but now it brought a pang of such intensity and bitterness it seemed to the young wife she could not bear it without expressing in some way the agony. It seemed to her that she could not meet him, but this condition did not last for soon her innate courage and the consciousness of her own innocence made her brave. She did not go to meet him at the door as had been her habit, but instead sat quietly in the low rocker. He crossed the room with his usual buoyant confidence; then noticing the attitude she had assumed, he dropped upon his knees beside her and taking her listless, unresponsive hands in his firm, magnetic grasp, he asked her anxiously:

"What is it, little girl? Are you ill? She looked at him calmly and as if from a great distance. He went on, "Have you had bad news concerning your father? Has something happened here to worry or alarm you?" He arose and began to pace back and forth in front of her. "Tell me, Bettina," he cried, stopping for a moment, and standing tall and handsome, looking down at her, with wonder that bordered upon fear in his dark eyes, "tell me what it is!"

"There is nothing," she began, and was surprised to find how politely conventional and strange her voice sounded, even to herself, "that you can do—now. It may be," she went on as

coolly as she could, although she could not keep her lips and chin from trembling pitifully, "that my father will wish to consult with you concerning certain matters that will need attention later on. But I," she ended, answering the look dawning in his eyes, "must fight *this* battle out alone. I have always been alone, you know," she added, as if in explanation of the statement she had made, "until just lately."

"What battle do you mean, Bettina?" he demanded. "What trouble can have come to you that your husband cannot share? Dear little wife, do not torture yourself needlessly. Let us talk this matter over, whatever it is, and face it together. Don't you think it is your *duty*," he ended, for he had found that that short word held a powerful leverage with her, "to let me know about this—and so end my suspense as soon as possible?"

"Legal marriage is only the outward expression of a tie that has nothing to do with the laws men have made; when this tie is broken, when it no longer binds two human beings together, then in reality the marriage is at an end—then *in reality* the two human beings are irretrievably separated."

She looked down and the man, gazing at her pale, sad features, understood—but was determined not to seem to do so. Raising her from the floor he lifted her until her eyes were on a level with his own and cried:

"There is no one who has a right to come between us! I belong to you, and you," holding her close to his wildly throbbing heart, "belong to me!"

But his passionate embrace met with no response this time; instead, she extricated herself

determinedly from his arms, and when she was again upon her feet she said in a steady voice:

"The tie that was between us has been broken."

XXXIV

Old Margaret had never felt entirely at home in the new abode, of which nevertheless she had cheerfully made herself a part. The prospect of going "home," though perhaps for but a short time was very pleasing to her. She went about preparations for the journey with alacrity, and kept them up almost unceasingly from the hour in which Bettina had told her until she was compelled through bodily weariness to retire for the night. She was up betimes the following morning, for it had been borne in on her that she should personally attend to several matters before her departure. Now she was closely companioned by Bonny who, knowing that some change in which she was interested was about to take place, was keenly alert. Suddenly Margaret's attention was attracted to a figure that was cautiously if not surreptitiously drawing near; it seemed to her that there was something familiar about its appearance and when she saw the collie advancing toward it, waving her plume-like tail as if to give a friendly welcome, she recognized her ancient enemy, Barney McCoy. As the little man came toward her he raised his hat and smiled ingratiatingly, but did not risk attempting to communicate with her through the medium of spoken words, for she was standing stockstill, arms akimbo, fists doubled up and eyes that glared defiantly at him. He kept smiling and after a while the old woman, not meeting with any opposition or hearing any declaration of war, relaxed a little her martial attitude. Taking advantage of this cessation of

probable hostilities the tutor with for him considerable meekness of demeanor, said:

"I have been expecting for some time to receive notice from my former pupil, or her husband, apprising me of their readiness to usher me into my new position (which I was to occupy in the capacity of private, or social, secretary). Failing to receive this I have concluded that it must have gone astray, in some manner, and feeling that complications might arise in consequence of my absence I decided to eliminate any possibility of the miscarriage of a formal notification by presenting myself here in person."

Bonny had gingerly sniffed the new arrival as if to confirm the testimony of her ocular sense, and apparently satisfied as to his identity had taken up a position at some little distance from the two human beings, where, sitting upon her haunches, she was placidly watching them. Old Margaret had listened with considerable equanimity to the effusive statement made her. In the first place, she was rather gratified to observe that although she was his only auditor, the former tutor had not hesitated to call to his aid some excessively elaborate and to her exceedingly "dark," nomenclature. This attitude together with the humility that his entire personality seemed to radiate, bolstered her growing belief that finally, after long years of ineffectual struggling, she was about to gain the whip-hand over him, to be in a position where she could do the dictating, instead of being treated with distant dignity as if she were an ignorant underling. Wishing to treat her vanquished foe with generosity, she started out in her new character with moderation:

"I do be afther thinkin' that what we expict an' what we do be layin' our hands on, in this wurld,

are two entoiirely siparate affairs; an' whin we die we may expict to go to Hivin, an' play wid harps an' walk on strates of gold—but accordin' til the praste we'll be more likely only jist to see the shinin' strates of Hivin as we're passin' by, an' what we'll lay our hands on will be burnin' coals an' pitchforks. An' as to this position that ye do be afther wantin'," folding her arms across her breast and standing so straight she leaned a little backward, "I don't see why the darlin' shud need a sicutary now, anny more than she did whin ye was her piddler's gob!" He winced as she applied this appellation to him and she felt that she had scored another triumph. "In gineral, I shud say it wud be better to presint yersilf in anny ither way excipt in person—but howiver that may be, presintin' yersilf whin darlin' is away won't do ye anny good!"

At that moment Kurk Kaleen came hastily out of the house and started toward the street, but was arrested by a voice that was so anxious as to be almost appealing. From what old Margaret had just said Barney McCoy feared that the only remaining member of the new family was about to escape him, and adding as much dignity as he could muster to his natural self-assurance, he hurriedly accosted him:

"My dear young gentleman, it is with great pleasure that I find you up and about at this early hour of the morning. The air at this time of the day has a bracing quality that, as I am well aware from my own experience, has a stimulating and exceedingly beneficial effect upon that mysterious psychological thing—the human intellect. But I have come, my dear young gentleman, to assume the duties that will indubitably attach to the position which, in accordance with the understanding

that I had with you before your marriage, I am to occupy here."

Kurk Kaleen had always, so far as able, taken advantage of every bit of flotsam or jetsam that had drifted in his direction, especially if he could make use of it for his own benefit. Under the peculiar conditions by which he had suddenly found himself surrounded, it occurred to him that he might at some future time need the assistance of someone who had been closely connected with the family of his young wife. Here before him stood a human being who might with proper management assist him in extricating himself from the labyrinth into which he seemed to have stumbled. Hence, instead of sending the little man scornfully away, as he might under pleasanter circumstances have done, he signalled to him to follow him, and when they were out in the street said guardedly:

"I am in great haste this morning, and will not be able to talk this matter over thoroughly at any time today. "He bit his lip and looked down nervously, but presently added, "If you will be here tomorrow evening at eight o'clock, I will arrange to be at liberty then."

XXXV

As soon as Margaret O'Keefe had removed the cumbersome cloak and throttling headgear that she considered proper traveling accoutrement, once again in the home of Walter Wane, she became busily and officiously engaged in examining into everything that had been done during her absence. She felt as if she had been forced, through her love for her wee wan, out of her natural element, and now she fairly disported herself in the midst of familiar scenes and congenial surrounding.

Bettina went at once to her father's study, and without wasting time upon unnecessary explanations, or giving way to fruitless emotion, declared:

"My marriage was a mistake. My husband and I are permanently estranged. I wish to know what you think I ought to do."

Father and daughter regarded each other seriously and silently, for a long moment; each read in the eyes of the other unswerving devotion to truth, undaunted courage and the ability to hold unfalteringly to a purpose, or to take an unalterable resolve. Before he spoke Walter Wane moved his chair a little nearer the one in which his daughter sat.

"There is but one thing for you to do, my daughter. If you can no longer remain in the home that your husband has provided for you, you will return at once to the shelter of the roof under which you were born. Certain matters will require adjustment, but all that is necessary at

the present time is that a perfect understanding should be established *between you and me*, so that we may meet together whatever contingencies may arise. I do not wish to know your reasons for the decision that you have made, except insofar as they will affect my attitude toward the man whose name you bear, as well as the members of his immediate family. I would like to know one thing, Bettina," he looked directly, and with reassuring kindness into her dark and troubled eyes, "have you become convinced that your husband has been untrue to his marriage vows?"

Her blue eyes filled with tears she was not wholly able to restrain, and with her long brown lashes, even her soft cheeks, wet with them, she sadly but firmly replied:

"I could not doubt the evidence that was presented to me. I tried to make myself believe," her low, sweet voice was trembling, "that I had been mistaken. But I do not think that Kurk Kaleen," and even in her gentle tones there was a trace of bitterness, "was ever really true to anything! It seemed as natural for him to lie as it has always been for me to speak the truth. I did not know that men could be like that, Father," she ended pitifully. "I supposed that they were all like you."

"I deeply regret my inability, Bettina," his strong voice shook with suppressed feeling, "to have saved you from the bitterness of this experience; it goes to show how limited and liable to err is my human understanding. I have always tried to shield you, ever since as a helpless infant you were given into my care, and yet when for the first time in your life you really needed protection, I was unable to give it to you. Because we were both blinded by outward appearance so

that we did not recognize the character of that which lay beneath them. I hoped at one time to gain the power to penetrate the masks that human beings almost always wear, to watch the working of the underlying motives that are the causes of the actions that we see, and are apt to judge each other by. I still hope," he went on more cheerfully, as if a sudden thought had heartened him, "that I may be able through the practical application of certain theories that I have recently been permitted to study to add to the efficiency of my perceptive faculties. It may be, my daughter," he concluded, giving her somehow a sense of comradeship with him such as she had never felt before, "that I shall be able, now that you have returned to me, to proceed with this study—to which I had decided to devote my life before you came into this world."

The pallor of the girl's young face, the dark circles beneath her eyes and the shadow that lay like a storm-cloud within the eyes themselves, testified to the fact that she had writhed in agony, as tender women always do when those they love are lost to them. They showed that she had spent sleepless nights, tossing restlessly back and forth trying to unravel the skein that had been hopelessly entangled before it had been even placed within her human hands; proved that she had shed searing, scathing, unavailing tears. Yet the fact that, having made a definite decision, she had acted upon it immediately instead of dallying with the verdict and thus prolonging but not assuaging the torturing suspense, exhibited the strength as well as the purity of her character. She looked up now, steadily and frankly, as if indeed she herself had been separated for the time being from all that had thus far come into her human life—as if

the powerful emotions that had been holding her beneath their sway had wrenched her entirely out of herself—as if all that had gone before was but a background, dimly seen and constantly receding. Her father recognized this mental attitude, and wishing to encourage it announced:

“I think that I myself will direct your studies henceforth. The education you have already had has of necessity been to a certain extent of a rudimentary or preparatory nature. You are now, for some mysterious reason, separated from your own kind, so that you can be like an onlooker instead of an actor, watching but not taking part in the conflicting emotions that govern human life; thus you will form unbiased opinions, and reason calmly from cause to effect. I believe, Bettina, that everything that comes to us is sent to us for some definite purpose which we can further by adjusting ourselves as congenially as possible to conditions and taking advantage of every step that plainly leads toward progress.”

That night Bettina, like a wounded dove, crept into the soft, warm nest that her old nurse had lovingly prepared for her; it was almost as if she were a little child again, for Bonny came and stood beside her bed as if to say that she would be on guard.

The girl was very weary, like a traveler who has journeyed far, and she slept as one who, after journeying has found his way back home.

“Miss darlin’,” called old Margaret the next morning, before the young woman was fairly awake, “I do be afther thinkin’ the violets an’ daisies will be glad to see the two of us, baith at the same time togither! An’ I hope,” she muttered, *sotto voce*, “that niver in this wurld—nor yit in anny ither wurld—will ye be afther meetin’ anither handsome an’ allurin’ man!”

XXXVI

Kurk Kaleen's father was secretly elated, although apparently perturbed, when he received from Walter Wane the formal announcement of the arrival of his daughter. The dignified and distant courtesy of this announcement was characteristic of its writer, and was understood by the one to whom addressed as a final notification.

Father and son then held a long and serious consultation, during the course of which the former said:

"I trust that you will not allow this unpleasant experience to greatly interfere with your future. Young men frequently make unfortunate matrimonial alliances, but usually, after they are legally freed from uncongenial entanglements, they do not feel any deleterious effects. In this particular case the great seclusion and pronounced pride of the family with which we have to deal preclude the possibility of unnecessary notoriety. Financially, affairs can be arranged readily and without friction."

"I have not yet," the young man declared, his dark eyes flashing dogged determination, "abandoned hope of reconciliation. My wife, on account of her youth and inexperience, has been deeply affected by what is not really a very grave matter. I hope that after she has had time for reflection and fully realizes the change that she would be making in her life if she remained in her father's home, she will decide to return to me. I shall use every possible effort," looking boldly and significantly into his father's face, "to bring about this result."

The older man looked at him, quizzically and thoughtfully. Finally, as if he had come to some definite decision, he said:

"There is a matter concerning which you are as yet in ignorance that might perhaps have some weight with you. You no doubt remember that Walter Wane insisted upon having a conference with me prior to your marriage. He bound me strictly to secrecy concerning the information that he gave me, at that time, and had your marriage proved a happy one I should probably never have divulged it. Under the present circumstances it seems to me that I may honorably consider myself freed at least so far as you are concerned, from the promise I made him." He walked over until he was standing near his son, who had impulsively risen, preparatory to leaving the room, and placing one hand on the younger man's shoulder continued, "I think I have told you that Walter Wane was considered at one time by many of his associates as somewhat mentally unbalanced. What he told me when I went to see him at his request would tend to confirm rather than refute any statement of this nature. He said to me that he believed that the human intellect progresses as the bud expands, until in due time it becomes the blossom; when it has reached a certain state of perfection—whether through the endurance of excruciating bodily pain or the bearing of intense mental agony, refining the mind as the crucible purifies the metal that in its crude condition has been thrown into it—it leaves its physical environment and without perceptible or at least conscious change, continues to progress. He wanted me to know," looking impressively at his son, "that he was not in sympathy with many of the orthodox forms of religious belief, although he admitted

that he had always complied with them in every important particular."

The young man had listened carefully to all that had been said and when his father ceased speaking he came a little nearer to him even than they had been before, and resting both his hands on the older man's shoulders, looked directly and earnestly into his eyes.

"I think I understand your motives, and I know that you have always my best interests at heart. But I must be allowed to use my own judgment. I do not consider that Mr. Wane's peculiar beliefs, for or against prevailing forms of religion, can have any bearing upon my individual family relations."

Realizing that further argument in this direction would be useless, and knowing the stubbornness of his son's disposition, Kurk Kaleen's father forbore to aggravate the situation, but on the contrary endeavored to emphasize the friendly feeling already existing between the younger man and himself. In pursuance of this desire he earnestly declared:

"I do not wish to seem to dictate in any way! I only wanted you to know everything that I myself had been made aware of, that might more or less affect you." Then, wishing to change the subject, he cast about in his mind in search of a suitable theme for conversation. Finally, as if he had found the very idea, he continued, "Have you seen Miss Burton lately? I met her father recently and found him a very interesting, sagacious man. She herself is without doubt a very bright, attractive and decidedly original young woman. I have never met a more courageous, sensible person than she—the buoyancy of her nature is delightfully refreshing!"

He waited, hoping that his son would take up the subject he had introduced, but as he did not seem inclined to do so he as casually inquired:

"Have you ever thought that you would care to visit America?"

The young man reluctantly replied:

"I expect to go there sometime. As you know, I have traveled very little except in my own and adjacent countries. That part of my education has been to a great extent sadly neglected, and I must remedy the matter whenever suitable opportunities are offered me. It seems to me that travel is apt to broaden one's view, give one fresh ideas and shed new light upon beliefs that one already holds."

Kurk Kaleen's father was not without spirit, although the meekness with which he had been bearing his son's numerous evasions might lead one who did not know him to think so. Feeling that nothing could be gained by further conciliatory measures and determined to find out something that he very much desired to know, he decided to throw discretion to the winds.

"I am going to ask you a question which you may consider impertinent, but to which nevertheless I expect a direct answer. "The young man recognized the tone of voice as being one with which he had been more or less familiar during his boyhood. "Have you ever seriously considered whether or not you would marry Miss Lena Burton?"

The expression of Kurk Kaleen's countenance as he silently regarded his father was kindly, even affectionate; at length, speaking firmly and steadily, he said:

"I do not think that one man has a right to ask another a question of that sort."

XXXVII

Many of the acquaintances of Kurk Kaleen who had met his retiring young wife pitied her profoundly when they heard of the separation of the young couple, for they immediately concluded that he had wearied of the sameness of domestic life and had voluntarily sent her away from him, his reputation as a fascinating as well as fickle lover having been well earned. Sometimes, however, a stream which has rippled beneath many a light and shifting breeze is suddenly strongly and deeply stirred by a force so mighty that all that has gone before is obliterated by it; and so it was with the emotional nature of the dark, eager, alert, young fellow who early one morning arrived at the home of Walter Wane. As he had hoped would be the case he found that Bettina, accompanied as usual by her old nurse, had gone out for a walk. He started in the direction in which he felt sure they had gone and soon caught sight of them, the young woman moving along so slowly that old Margaret had no difficulty in keeping pace. As he came within earshot he distinctly heard Bettina's sweet voice saying:

"Margaret, dear, you do enjoy being out in the country again, don't you?"

The tones of her voice had never sounded sweeter or more musical than they did then; to see her moving along there before him, so near and yet so very far away, was hard for his impatient strength. He longed to speak to her but dreaded the possible reception that might be awaiting him.

While he hesitated he heard quick, pattering footsteps behind, and was convinced that Bonny was approaching. To avoid complications with the collie, which he knew from experience might arise, he hurried forward and, placing one hand, gently, on Bettina's arm, whispered:

"Dear little girl, I missed you! I had to come!"

Flesh and blood are marvelous conductors of magnetic force; this fact is being repeatedly proven in many ways. "The laying on of hands" is proverbial; any human being who attempts to calm, control or influence any earthly creature, knows the advantage to be gained by actual contact. If a person who is trying to govern the actions of any other has already had experience with the creature in question that experience will be advantageous to him, and Kurk Kaleen's memories of the warmth and intensity of his young wife's affectionate, passionate and almost entirely hitherto suppressed nature were very vivid, very compelling. It did not seem possible that her sweet lips, yielded as they had been to him alone, would be forevermore withheld; it did not seem to him that he would nevermore be electrified and thrilled by the clasp of her soft arms. Bettina herself was conscious of the power of his presence; the tinglingly delicious, surging ecstasy that instantly and without her own volition registered itself upon her flesh and all of her sensitive, answering, normal nerves would have apprised her of the fact that he was there, without his spoken words. But the forces that appeal to body and blood alone, once understood and classified, are not permitted to direct the action of a refined and reasoning human being. Other magnetic currents—more powerful than those that can be conducted only through an earthly body—were set in motion

when the young wife knew that the man into whose keeping she in her innocence had given the first flower of her womanhood was near her. These latter currents are constantly above, beneath and around every living being with an intelligence that is capable of rising above the demands of merely physical appetites. That part of Bettina Wane, through which alone the stronger currents can find their way and so exert their influence, had been from the very beginning of her mortal existence—whether through inheritance or not, I am not able to determine—particularly sensitive. Through education and environment they had been developed to such an extent that they completely overcame or effectually deflected those lower forces that might now have guided or temporarily controlled her. Bettina Kaleen had taken into her married life the high ideals, the unbroken and beautiful aspirations, and the fresh, untarnished and devoted faith of her girlhood. She had placed all these within the structure in which her husband and herself alone could dwell—their marital faith; under the protection and in the safety of this dignified and imposing dwelling she had expected that they too would remain while their human hearts continued to beat and while the warm, responsive blood continued to flow through their human veins. When this structure that she had builded began to exist for her alone, as represented by the little heap of dull, gray ashes, the powerful physical currents had for the time being been made comparatively inactive. So that when the electrifying human hand of Kurk Kaleen lay once more upon the arm of her who was even then legally his wife, the current that it immediately established was met, counteracted

and eventually grounded by the action of a force beside which it was powerless, even puerile.

"I am very sorry if you have had to suffer too." Bettina spoke quite calmly, having been able almost at once to recover from the shock his unexpected presence had given her. "Yet I believe you will soon find you do not miss me very much." There was no sound of self-pity or regret in her steady tones. "I surely hope that this will be so. I," she went on coolly, as if she were discussing some little accident that had recently involved them both, "expect to turn my attention to serious study, perhaps travel, with my father."

Old Margaret had been trudging along, a silent but openly curious spectator of the scene. The belligerent expression that had spread itself over her countenance as soon as she had realized to whom the quick, strong step that she had heard belonged, gave way to one of pleased surprise that soon developed into proud, triumphant satisfaction when she "sensed" Bettina's attitude, and listened to the clear, calm tones of her sweet voice. When these had ceased, however, and the silence had become oppressive to her, she exclaimed, ignoring the young man's presence altogether:

"I do be afther thinkin', darlin', that we, the baith of us at the same toime, togither, will be afther havin' a foine toime whin we do be afther crossin' the say an' inspictin' all thim furrin' lands that ye've been afther readin', an' I've been dramin' about—iver since we knew that we cud walk, at all, at all."

"Yes, Margaret, dear," the girl's tones now were tender and protecting, "I think we shall see much that is interesting and beautiful."

By the time that Bonny had come up with the

little group the young man was a little behind the others, so that Bonny, although she recognized him perfectly, did not molest him. Indeed, as her great eyes solemnly regarded him, there was more of pity than malignity in their brown depths; it was as if she knew that the *sins*—that she had all along suspected—had found him out, and that he was being sent away because of them. Bonny was naturally a gentle creature, and her inborn instincts prompted her to help all those she knew to be unfortunate. Kurk Kaleen at that moment glanced in her direction and instead of growling at him as she had done more than once before she smiled at him, a little sadly it is true, and began to wave her plume-like tail.

Perhaps in acknowledgment of this change in her attitude toward him he included her in the sweeping glance of his flashing dark eyes when he said:

“I will no longer intrude. I wish you a very good morning.”

THE END.

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**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

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